UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN CONVERSION IN A BLACK TOWNSHIP PARISH

by

BAFANA GILBERT HLATSHWAYO, CSsR.

submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

MISSIOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR. J.N.J. KRITZINGER

NOVEMBER 1997
SUMMARY

This is a hermeneutical study of an attempt to inculturate a Redemptorist parish mission in a black township parish. The purpose of Redemptorist parish mission is conversion and renewal. This study is influenced by - the spirit of St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787) founder of the Redemptorists - Vatican II (1962-1965) and by the African Synod (1994); and it uses the systemic stage model of Rambo and the spiral model of Costas, as a framework to understand conversion. The conversion experiences of ten parishioners of St. Peter's parish are used as data for the study. A theological reflection on the ten conversions confirmed the following: that cultural context is important for understanding conversion; that conversion is both a distinct moment and a continuous process; that it is imperative to understand conversion from the perspective of the convert him/herself. For 'mission preaching' to effect genuine conversion it must be inculturated.

KEY WORDS

Christian conversion
Township Parish
Redemptorist mission
African Culture
Apartheid
Sacraments of Initiation
St. Alphonsus Liguori
Inculturation
Sodalities
Lewis Rambo
Orlando Costas
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Nature and purpose of study.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Personal involvement.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Theology of mission.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1 St Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2 The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.3 The African Synod (1994)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.4 Conclusion.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Co-operative human inquiry method of research.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 A holistic method of understanding conversion.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5.1 Rambo’s holistic method.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5.2 Costas’ spiral model</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Empirical investigation.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1 St Peter’s parish of Tlhabane</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.2 The origins of the research.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.3 Sampling.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.4 Questionnaire and Structured interviews.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Overview of chapters.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CHAPTER TWO

2. **CONVERSION EXPERIENCE IN TLHABANE.**

2.1 Conversion as Affiliation.

2.1.1 Gerald Maleka Masinamela.

2.1.2 Sister Veronica Molejane.

2.1.3 Amos Tiro Dinake.

2.1.4 Conclusion.

2.2 Conversion as intensification.

2.2.1 Geraldine Barileng Claries.

2.2.2 Sophia Tumelo.

2.2.3 Conclusion.

2.3 Conversion as Institutional Transition.

2.3.1 Gloria Tiny Moagi.

2.3.2 Conclusion.

2.4 Conversion as Tradition Transition.

2.4.1 Elizabeth Moitshudi Modise.

2.4.2 Francinah Motsatsi.

2.4.3 Conclusion.

2.5 Conversion as Apostasy/Defection.

2.5.1 Gladys Bakhalelani Makhuba.

2.5.2 Lucia Hartley.

2.5.3 Conclusion.
CHAPTER THREE.

3. A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE TEN CONVERSIONS.

3.1 The contexts of conversion.

3.1.1 The macro context of apartheid.

3.1.1.1 The macro context of extreme poverty

3.1.1.2 The macro context of missionary Christianity.

3.1.1.3 Macro context and conversion.

3.1.2 The micro context of family.

3.1.2.1 Marriage and family life.

3.1.2.2 Micro context and conversion.

3.2 Crisis and Quest in Conversion.

3.2.1 Pathology as a crisis and the quest for healing.

3.2.1.1 African Disease and healers.

3.2.1.2 Dreams and conversion.

3.2.2 Conclusion.

3.3 Encounter and Interaction in conversion.

3.3.1 Roman Catholicism.

3.3.1.1 Leadership.

3.3.1.2 Sodalities.

3.3.1.2.1 St. Anne's Sodality.

3.3.1.2.2 Sacred Heart Sodality.

3.3.1.3 Small Christian Communities.

3.3.1.4 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

3.3.1.5 Conclusion.

3.4 Commitment and Consequences in conversion.

3.4.1 Sacraments of Initiation.

3.4.1.1 Baptism and Confirmation.

3.4.1.2 Eucharist.

3.4.2 Conclusion.
CHAPTER FOUR.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The process of research.

4.1.1 Evaluation of Rambo and Costas.

4.1.1.1 Rambo's systemic stage model of conversion.

4.1.1.2 Costas' Christian spiral model of conversion.

4.1.2 Limits of the method of research.

4.2 The contents of the research.

4.2.1 Cultural context.

4.2.2 Defining Christian Conversion.

4.2.3 Inculturated Mission Preaching - a Redemptorist approach.

4.2.3.1 Inculturation and Liturgy.

4.3 Questions for further study.

4.4 Conclusion.

APPENDICES

1. Questionnaires.

2. Seven steps of Bible sharing.


4. Abbreviations.

LIST OF REFERENCES CITED.
Acknowledgements

This study was initiated by the experiences I had with the 'Redemptorist mission team', since I was ordained to the priesthood in 1988. With the support and prayers of my brother Redemptorists, I was brave enough to undertake such a demanding and challenging project, in spite of the fact that I was going through difficult times in my personal life and vocation. I am deeply indebted to the Redemptorist communities of Rustenburg and Cape Town for their encouragement and their interest, and to my superiors for providing finances for the different projects involved in the study.

My supervisor, Klippies Kritzinger, has been patient, understanding and supportive. The 1993 Pastoral Plan Team of the Diocese of Rustenburg provided the background to this study, which was born during the 1993 'mission' preached in Tlhabane at the parish of St. Peter's. My gratitude to Michael Kirwen and the Maryknoll Institute of African Studies in Nairobi with whom I spent six weeks in 1994 to develop my empirical research skills.

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) and the David Bosch Memorial Fund towards this research are hereby acknowledged. However, these cannot be held accountable for the opinions expressed and conclusions reached in this study. Finally, my gratitude to my own family, and the many friends all over the country who have given me genuine support and friendship through their prayers, encouragement and assistance, during this time of trial. Certain people deserve special mention: Fr. Dieter Gahlen CMM, who rescued the copy of the thesis from his computer when it disappeared mysteriously, Mrs. Veronica Wellburn for retyping the script, and Mrs Margaret Gallager for printing it. May God bless and reward them all.
CHAPTER ONE

I. INTRODUCTION

Ever since Jesus spoke these words to his disciples:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And, look, I am with you always, yes to the end of time (Matthew 28:19-20),

and after the Pentecostal experience: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves" (Acts 2:4), the disciples made this the very reason of their existence as a community. So, throughout the history of the church this mandate or command of Jesus has been put into practice in a variety of ways. This shaped the nature and purpose of the church which varied as the ages passed, but still embodied the mission of the church (Power 1970:87).

Modern scholars of missiology, when discussing the manner in which the Christian church has, through the ages, interpreted and carried out its mission, agree that at different times the perspective was different. David Bosch (1991:181) adopted Hans Küng's historical-theological periodisation of the entire history of Christianity, which Küng fashioned according to Thomas Kuhn's theory of "paradigm shifts". Each of the six periods of Christian history, Küng suggests, reveals a peculiar understanding of the Christian faith, and reflects a theological "paradigm" profoundly different from any of its predecessors. The theories of "paradigm shifts" provides this study with a historical-theological context of the movement from the Modern Enlightenment to the Emerging Ecumenical paradigm. Kuhn himself limits this theories to the natural sciences ("mature" sciences) and explicitly excludes references to the social sciences ("proto-sciences in his view") (Bosch 1991:184). In natural sciences the new paradigm usually replaces the old, definitely and irreversibly, whereas in theology the
"old paradigm can live on" (186). In fact, the "old" paradigm seldom disappears completely.

Following this theory of "paradigm shifts" one can see the reason why it is complex to understand religious conversion. With the emerging "new" paradigm we cannot take it for granted that conversion is a static, once for all, private experience (Costas 1980:173); rather it is imperative for us to recognize it as a variable phenomenon, subject to the structural, ideological, theological and personal demands of both advocates and potential converts (Rambo 1993:6).

Kuhn eventually defines the term paradigm as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community". Küng adopted the term and used it in theology as "models of interpretation". The term has also been used as "frames of knowledge", "frames of reference" and "research traditions" and even "belief systems". Schreiter (1985:1) writes that there has been an important shift in perspective in theology in recent years. Theology is now seen as reflection of Christians upon the gospel in light of their own circumstances. Initially the focus was on the gospel, but now the focus has shifted to how the circumstances of the people shape their response to the gospel. This focus is being expressed with terms like "localization", "contextualization", indigenisation" and "inculturation". Despite slightly different nuances in meaning, all of these terms point to the need for Christians to make their response to the gospel as concrete and lively as possible.

The current times are of transition. According to Bosch (1991:349), we are for the most part, at the moment, thinking and working in terms of two paradigms, that is, the Modern Enlightenment and the Ecumenical paradigms. The new paradigm is therefore still emerging and it is not yet clear which shape it will eventually adopt. New paradigms can take decades, sometimes even centuries, to develop their distinctive contours.
1.1. Nature and Purpose of Study

This paradigm shift has influenced significantly the way in which theologians and other Christian writers reflect on the meaning of conversion. "Conversion, in the traditional Evangelical understanding, is a static, once-for-all, private experience. Furthermore it was viewed as transcultural, non-contextual event, as though it were the same everywhere to all believers, at all times" (Costas 1980:173). Costas gives what he calls a biblical, theological and socio-historically sound view of conversion as a dynamic, complex, ongoing experience, profoundly responsive to particular times and places and shaped by the context of those who experience it (1980:173).

There are many contemporary scholars researching conversion, such as McKinney (1994) and Conn (1986) who are influenced by the emerging ecumenical paradigm in their understanding of conversion. However, in this study I predominantly use the views of Rambo (1993), in which he introduces a holistic model of understanding conversion.

According to Rambo, the experience of conversion must be understood within its total framework, which includes the cultural, social, personal, religious and historical dimensions. The focus is now on the circumstances of the person who is converting. That is why conversion is a complex and multifaceted process, which can be triggered by a particular event but takes place over a period of time. For Costas (1980:182) the complexity of conversion lies in the fact that it is a plunge into an ongoing adventure. For him Christian conversion is "a journey into the mystery of the Kingdom of God which leads from one experience to another", and he calls this a spiral model of conversion.

However, Rambo's approach is a Religious Studies one, that is, the model can be applied to conversion from any religion to any religion, whereas that of Costas is more of a Christian theological approach, taking its stand firmly within Christian theology.
This study brings together the spiral model of Costas and the holistic model of Rambo to form a framework by means of which to understand Christian conversion. This will be done practically as a hermeneutical study. Through structured interviews certain individuals (cf.1.6) have been asked to share their conversion stories, their ongoing adventure of experiences of conversions (spiral model), whereas each specific dimension of conversion will also be examined (holistic model).

The problem that is the central area of concern of this thesis finds its roots in my experience. When I began mission preaching in African parishes I was presented with a totally different situation from that of English speaking parishes. The problems encountered were similar to those I experienced in my own life and background (cf.1.2). This made me ask the question of conversion, that is, how African people understand and live their Christian conversion. I became interested in what conversion means and/or should mean to them.

The purpose of this study is, first, to develop a new missiological approach to conversion by combining the holistic model of Rambo and the spiral model of Costas. Secondly, to test this approach empirically by interviewing a number of parish members of St. Peter's Catholic Church, Tlhabane (cf.1.6.2). Thirdly, to make some suggestions regarding inculturation, mission preaching and conversion.

1.2. Personal Involvement.

In 1982 February 2nd, I was professed as a member of a Religious Congregation called "Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer", commonly known as "Redemptorists". The Redemptorists are a male congregation in the Catholic Church, founded by St. Alphonsus in 1732 in the South of Italy (cf.1.3.1). Like the Jesuits and Franciscans, they preach throughout the world and are today found in more than 64 countries, one of the largest male congregations in the Church. Becoming a member of a religious congregation meant that I
would have to take the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity\textsuperscript{1}.

The vows made sense to me within the context of the Church and I was prepared to accept everything about this religious life. But, from my context or background there was a lot of conflict. For example, no one from my family had ever done this. And since the vow of chastity meant that I cannot get married and have children, it was in direct conflict with some of the central values in my culture. My uncle had three wives at the time and was not ready to accept the life I had chosen. My father accepted and supported me in my choice but would never talk about it at all. The most difficult thing about the decision to become a religious was that my uncle could not become a Catholic because he was a polygamist.

The Redemptorists have among them those who are ordained to the ministry of priesthood and others who are not. So, there are Brothers and Priests in the congregation. In 1988, June 25\textsuperscript{th} I was ordained a Priest. My ministry was to preach Missions, which is a typical Redemptorist activity. A team of 3 or 4 Redemptorists would “take over” a parish to which they are invited. For two weeks they would “renew” the parish, by visiting all the families, preaching and celebrating the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Penance. Our focus was mainly on English-speaking parishes at the time. It was only when I started going to African parishes that I was really challenged. I discovered that the traditional “Mission” approach does not do justice to the situation of African people. First, more than 90% of priests ministering to African people were white and expatriates. They did not know the people’s language and culture. Secondly, I grew up knowing that my grandmother and two of my aunts could not become Catholics because they were “witchdoctors”.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Based on the model of the Church as a hierarchical institution (Dulles 1974:41), religious life follows the same model. Orders are a high form of religious life, while congregations are a lower form and societies are the lowest form. Evangelical Vows of chastity, obedience and poverty are at the heart of religious life. For orders like the Franciscans (OFM), Dominicans (OP), etc. the vows are solemn. For congregations like Redemptorists (CSsR), Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), etc., the vows are simple. Societies like the Jesuits (SJ), are bound by the evangelical counsels and some among them take a fourth vow of obedience to the Pope.

\textsuperscript{2}Missionary Christianity did not understand African culture. Health is something the people of Africa took seriously, which is why healers are such prominent members of the community. Among the healers in African communities are Ngaka ya ditlhare, Sangoma, Ngaka ya ditlaola, Mosebeletsi, etc. All these different kinds of healers were regarded as “witchdoctors” by missionary Christianity, and Christians were forbidden to associate with them.
Now, on “Missions” in African parishes, I was meeting people who had to stop going to church because they had become Sangomas (African traditional healers). One woman Sangoma said: “A priest told me that if I go into the church I’ll die”. She did not go to church herself, but she used to send her daughter to Church to fetch her water blessed by a priest (holy water), which she used as medicine to heal her patients. Thirdly, the majority of married people in African parishes were not taking part in the “Sacraments”. I learned they were only married according to African custom, and unless they are married according to the church ritual they are not allowed to take part in the Sacraments.³

When I encountered these problems I knew immediately that we cannot just translate the traditional “mission” approach and apply it to an African situation. I realized that we were called to something radically new. It became important for me to study the context of our ministry of “Mission preaching” and to initiate a different approach, which is being shaped and tested (cf. 4.2.3).

1.3. Theology of Mission

In this study the Roman Catholic tradition is the basis of my theology of mission. There are three major influences on my theology of mission. First, the Redemptorist congregation, of which I am a member, and its founder St Alphonsus Liguori. Secondly, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962-1965), which was a revolutionary event in the life history of the Roman Catholic Church. Thirdly, the African Synod of 1994, which gave inculturation as a particular focus and direction for the African Church.

---

³ The experience of the Reformation in the 16th century which brought about the split between Catholics and Protestants, saw Protestants concentrate on the Bible and Catholics on the sacraments. Therefore, Catholics have a well developed sacramental theology while Protestants focus on biblical theology. Sacraments are at the heart of Catholic belief and practice, since through them Catholics experience contact with God and his power is made available to them. For a person to take part in the sacraments, he/she must be in full communion with the church. According to the practise of the Church certain people have been denied the sacraments; e.g. those who have been divorced and re-married, those not married in the church and those who have been excommunicated.
The problem encountered by Christian theology today is reflected by a “shifting perspective” in theology, the shift from the traditional to a contextual perspective of doing theology, which is adopted in this study. Contextual theology is the kind of theology which takes the context in which theology is done very seriously. In a general sense, all theology is contextual, in that it belongs to a particular context, time and place, but in the specific sense that it is used here, contextual theology refers to a theology in which careful context analysis is a conscious and deliberate dimension of theology itself. Christian theology today is challenged to reflect on its approach and its relevance in the different contexts in which it finds itself. The challenge is best expressed in the words of Max Warren in the “General Introduction” to the Christian Presence series of books: “Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion is to take off our shoes for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on other’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before we arrived” (Cragg 1959:9).

We are in many ways influenced by the past, but we must not be trapped in our past. It is by drawing from the past that we can get a deeper insight into what mission might mean today. Given the situation of “paradigm shift” which we are experiencing presently, Christian theology is challenged to explore its relevance for the present. From the beginning the Church has followed closely the command of Christ, and this command was understood and put into practice differently in different ages. The basic understanding was: “The pilgrim church is missionary by her very nature, since she draws her origin from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit according to the design of the Father” (Neuner & Dupuis 1973:308). Having given this basic introduction to my theology of mission, let me now identify the three roots of it, which I have mentioned above.

1.3.1. St Alphonsus Maria de Liguori (1696 - 1787)

Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, founder of the Redemptorist Congregation, was born in 1696 into an aristocratic family, a Neapolitan of the South of Italy. At 17 years of age he was
already a doctor of Canon and Civil Law. His family was very religious and their house was run like a monastery. As a lawyer, Alphonsus one day lost a lawsuit and that was a turning point in his life. He gave up his nobility and law practice and became a priest.

As a priest Alphonsus worked in the City of Naples. One day at the Bay of Amalfi in Scala, while recuperating from a life-threatening disease, he discovered many people, including shepherds, who were deprived of the sacrament of the Word of God (Johnstone 1988:10). In 1732 Alphonsus founded a missionary congregation in response to this need, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris - C.Ss.R). “The only purpose of our Institute”, wrote Alphonsus in September 1733, “is the work of Missions which meant going from city to city, diocese to diocese, preaching the Love of God and spiritual renewal” (:12). He became bishop in 1762. He believed in the apostolate of the pen and wrote many works. He was declared a doctor of prayer and patron of confessors and moral theologians, and was canonized a saint in 1839.

St Alphonsus’ theology of mission was greatly influenced by the extraordinary way the Son of God gave himself for us. He frequently cited the text: “Jesus Christ. Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8). Another key verse in his theology was Hebrews 4:15: “For the high priest we have is not incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us, but has been put to the test in exactly the same way as ourselves, apart from sin”. Jesus Christ dominated the thinking of St Alphonsus as the incarnate Son of God, the word of God made flesh, as the way that God showed his love for the human race. Alphonsus saw his mission as following the example of Jesus. In preaching the gospel to the poor, Alphonsus would become poor and simple, identifying with them as much as possible.

In his ministry, St Alphonsus was compassionate and understanding. Unlike his
contemporaries he was empathetic in his approach; he would never enforce the law of the Church until he understood the people and their situation. One of the several pastoral problems which occupied the attention of St. Alphonsus was the practice - especially among men - of cursing the dead, which was regarded by the Church at the time as a form of blasphemy. This referred to the habit of cursing the dead in general or some dead relative of the person one wishes to offend seriously. Blasphemy is always a serious offence against God and falls under a category of reserved sins, so the Bishop reserved decision about this to himself or a few priests to emphasize its seriousness. Alphonsus, from his own experience of the people and his knowledge of their mentality, began to suspect that this habit - however reprobate or disrespectful - did not possess the grave malice of blasphemy. Because this habit constituted a grave sin, it followed that many men were excluded from the sacraments and ultimately fell away from the faith. He used psychological understanding and concluded that in most of the cases this was not a grave sin at all. In this way, Alphonsus removed one of the obstacles which prevented many people from receiving Jesus Christ in the sacraments; Jesus who brings plentiful redemption to all who receive him. It was by committing his views to paper that Alphonsus began a debate in the field of Moral Theology (Jones 1992:203).

St Alphonsus was therefore a lawyer who became a priest and a bishop, who founded a missionary congregation of men who live the mystery of Christ and proclaim his gospel in simplicity of life and language to bring all people plentiful redemption (Constitution 20: 1982). St Alphonsus was loyal to the Church, to Jesus Christ and his teaching. He exercised his ministry and leadership with compassion and challenge. He was not afraid to challenge the law of the Church, especially where it was an obstacle to the proclamation of the gospel. It is this spirit and attitude of St. Alphonsus that influences the way I deal with the pastoral problems I encounter among African people whose culture has been judged and condemned as evil by the Church without understanding it.
1.3.2. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962 - 1965).

Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, called together by Pope John XXIII in 1959, congregated in Rome for a historic ecumenical council which was held intermittently from 1962 to 1965. After the death of Pope John XXIII in 1963, it continued under the leadership of Pope Paul VI. Some critics described Vatican II as the Church that was locked in an image of being institutional and hierarchical now opening the windows to let the Holy Spirit blow through a “Breath of fresh air.” The unexpected and revolutionary council was an occasion for the Church to do some reflection and undergo some transformation.

Ecclesiology plays an important role in theology, in fact, every theology contains an explicit or implicit image of the Church. Hans Künig (1967:341) wrote that by the time of the Council of Constantinople (381), the Church defined itself as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. In the document on the Church (LG 8), Vatican II declares: “This Church, constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter the Apostle and by the Bishops in union with that successor” (Abbot 1966:23). It follows that the mission of the Church is to spread the true teaching of Jesus Christ to all who are outside the physical boundary of the Church: Protestants and non-Christians alike. Saayman (1984:59) mentions that for Roman Catholics unity traditionally meant that Protestants had to come back to the one true Church of Christ. They affirmed the adage, “Extra ecclesiam nulla salus”: Outside the [Catholic] Church there is no salvation.

Vatican II moved away from this institutional and hierarchical model of the Church in its theology of mission. It saw the Church as a Mystical Communion, which means that it is a complex reality that cannot be captured or fully understood by one model alone. The most revolutionary model of the Church used by Vatican II is the Church as “People of God”, which is a clear break with the past where the Church was seen as dominantly hierarchical. The new vision means that all the baptized members of the Church are equal children of God.
Vatican II was deeply Scriptural; in fact it was by going back to Scripture and the Early Church that theologians who influenced Vatican II came up with this revolutionary approach of the Council. It followed from a rediscovery of the Pauline image of the Church as the “Body of Christ” by exegetical scholars such as Lucien Cerfauz (1959) and was greatly stimulated by the encyclical “Mystici Corporis Christi” of Pope Pius XII (1943), in which he said: “The church is the new people of God which exists under the form of the Body of Christ” (McNamara 1968:29). Other theologians who influenced Vatican II on the notion of the Church as “Mystery” and as a “Body” are especially Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx.

Henry de Lubac (1969-2) wrote that the Church embraces incompatibles: “I am told that she is holy, yet I see her full of sinners; that she is one and yet she is divided.” Rahner and Schillebeeckx both speak of Christ as the mystery of the fullness of divine revelation, “The visible realization of God’s saving reality in history” (Schillebeeckx 1963:47). Christ is the sacrament of encounter with God. The first document of the Council opens with a chapter entitled, “The Mystery of the Church”. The three persons of the Trinity form the ‘Mysterious’ character of the universal church. “A people brought into unity from the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (LG 4).

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG) and the Decree on Ecumenism (UR) mark the full entry of the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement (Abbott 1966:339). Protestants who were in the past regarded as targets, like all those to be converted, are now seen as co-workers in mission. Pope John XXIII called them “Separated Brethren”. The document of Vatican II on mission, The decree on the Church's missionary activity (AG), basically sees the Church’s mission as going out into the world and not the past attitude of trying to bring everyone into the Church. The decree (AG) noticeably expresses the difference between the Roman Catholic and Protestant approaches to
ecumenism (Saayman 1984:58), nevertheless for Catholics it is very important for the introduction of the theology of the local church⁴. This is associated with ‘power-sharing’. “The particular church must represent the universal church as perfectly as possible” (Neuner & Dupuis 1973:312). Both the decrees (AD) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS) (1965) give as the law of evangelization the adaptation of the message and inculturation (313).

In conclusion, we can say that Vatican II was indeed revolutionary and that since then the Church developed in the direction indicated by the Council. The mission of the Church was indeed directed “ad gentes”, that is, to the nations. Pope Paul VI’s Mission Sunday Message (1970) addresses the relationship between evangelization, human development and ‘reading the signs of the times’. Mission theology developed in such a way that Scripture became central and the situation of the world was being taken into account, which means that Catholics now accept unity in diversity in their view of mission. In 1975 Pope Paul VI produced an Apostolic Exhortation (EN) (Evangelization in the Modern World). From this was born the Pastoral Plan of the South African Catholic Bishop Conference with the theme of “Community Serving Humanity”⁵. For me, Vatican II made official what St. Alphonsus stood for - by implying that evangelization is incomplete without the adaptation of the message and inculturation.

1.3.3. The African Synod (1994).

*Redemptoris Missio* (1990) is the first encyclical on mission since Vatican II, produced by Pope John Paul II, explicitly to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Ad Gentes*. At the heart of

---

⁴The Second Vatican Council laid the foundation for the theology of the local church when it defined the church as ‘the people of God’. What in the past applied to the Pope and the Holy See, now applies to each Bishop and the local church. According to Vatican II, authority and responsibility should be decentralized and shared.

⁵The Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, in response to the 1974 Synod on Evangelization, initiated a study on “Evangelization in S.A. Today”. This resulted in the adoption of a Pastoral Plan in 1987 which took as a theme the statement ‘Community serving humanity’. It contends that Christians must first become a community built on the word of God, through small Christian communities and neighbourhood groups coming together to read and share the word of God. This is how the Church can become a community that can better serve humanity.
Redemptoris Missio is an exploration of the key tension that makes the Church what it is: the tensions between necessary unity and legitimate diversity ('one'); between evangelization and inculturation ('holy'); between the uniqueness of mission and its universality ('catholic'); between the one mission and the many ministries (including but not exclusively, orders) by which it is effected ('apostolic').

The creative tension that encyclical (RM) explores is similar to what David Bosch (1991:2), a Protestant theologian, refers to as, “Between danger and opportunity”. He points out that Christian mission, as traditionally interpreted and performed, is under attack from within and from without. In fact, the Church always lives in crisis and tension. The encyclical encourages the ‘young’ churches - who are in the forefront of the effort to inculturate the gospel - themselves to be missionaries, for the sake of building a Church that is truly African.

Vatican II was truly a prophetic council, which led the Roman Catholic Church to the development of the new emerging paradigm, and the African Synod took this forward. Over a period of time, some bishops, priests, consecrated people, theologians and lay people in Africa expressed the desire for an African Council or African Synod, which would have the task of evaluating evangelization in Africa in the light of the great choices to be made regarding the continent’s future. Responding to this, the Pope announced, on 6 January 1989, the convocation of a Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops which would be held in 1994.

Sister Maria Rita Matiku IHS, one of the few women who attended the Synod, wrote in the foreword of The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives: “What took place before and after the Synod in grassroots communities and local parishes across the African Continent may be even more significant than the actual gathering of Bishops in Rome from April 10 to May 8, 1994" (Africa Faith & Justice Network 1996:vii).

The Pope officially presented the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (EA) to the Church
in Africa during the papal visit in 1995, which included South Africa. The positive outcome of the presentation of this document is that it has brought into focus in an unprecedented way within the church the issue of inculturation: “It is the entire Christian life that needs to be inculturated. A special attention should be paid to liturgical and sacramental inculturation, because it directly concerns all the people who are already participating in it” (Africa Faith & Justice Network 1996:76). At the heart of inculturation is the activity of making a church that is truly African (Waliggo 1986:11). The African Synod gave a particular focus and direction to the African Church in the development of the emerging new paradigm: “The Synod considers inculturation an urgent priority in the life of the particular churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa. It is ‘a requirement for evangelization’, a path towards full evangelization” (EA)(Propositions 29,30,32).

1.3.4. Conclusion.

To conclude this exposition of the theology of mission that informs my approach, let me summarise it as follows: The missionary nature of the church is grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel must be deeply rooted in the lives and the situation of those who embrace it, those who are converted to Christ. Missionary Christianity came as “foreign missions” and introduced the gospel; now is the time to take the process a step further and build “local missions”. This is the age of evangelization as inculturation. For me mission take place in two parts, the first of which has already happened, that is, the introduction of the gospel by outsiders. The second part is what the “new paradigm” is all about, namely that the converted local people become the messengers. So, my approach is to reach out to the grassroots, to the parish communities, to the small Christian communities and bring the gospel, its message and its power to save. We will only have a truly African church when the African people takes over the work of evangelization. This is necessary for the gospel to be deeply rooted in Africa. It is in this context that we can only begin to talk about genuine conversion.
1.4. "Co-operative human inquiry" as method of research.

Having explained my basic theological approach, I move to the question of research method. The basic methodology of research for this study follows the movement of "new paradigm" research. Reason and Rowan (1981:xiii) put together a source book for new paradigm research, which is a synthesis of naive inquiry and orthodox research. This method they called the "co-operative human inquiry" method of research which is "objectively subjective", bringing together both the subjective, naive inquiry and the objective, old paradigm research.

Heron's response to this problem is to point out that, whereas orthodox researchers presuppose that they are self-directed in their research while requiring their subjects to be other-directed, it is possible to conceive of another approach in which all those involved are self-directed, contributing both to the reactive thinking and the research action (Reason 1981:4).

Wholeness implies participation, which means empathy - an almost complete identification with the subject of our attention - and empathy implies responsibility since we cannot truly participate in the whole unless we take responsibility for it (Reason 1981:10). In cross-cultural encounter the researchers are faced with the problem of how they can enter into the world of others and meet them in their uniqueness, and be present to them with all the grace and attentiveness that we see Jesus meeting people in the gospels. Susan Rakoczy (1992:17), following David Augsburger, suggests that one has to be sympathetic, empathetic and interpathetic. Sympathy is the spontaneous response to another's emotional experience: "I know just how you feel". Empathy goes deeper, for one shares another's feelings through compassionate active imagination. Interpathy allows one to enter the world of others in their uniqueness. It is an experience of "feeling with" and "thinking with" the other, an experience of mutuality which is the quality of being reciprocal with the other.

This new paradigm method of research is similar to that used by Spradley (1980:28) in his
"participant observation" approach to ethnography. Rather than studying people, ethnography for him means learning from people. Beginning from a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance, the ethnographer tries to grasp the "native" point of view, their relation to life, to realize their vision of their world. Philpott's "participatory research" method also belongs to the new paradigm. He believes that it is impossible to be objective and uninvolved in any research and emphasizes the complexity and inter-dependence of social reality, which cannot just be divided into isolated sections that are then experimented upon (Philpott 1993:20).

1.5. A holistic method of understanding conversion.

In this study, I approach the phenomenon of conversion from the viewpoints provided by the studies of Rambo (1993) and Costas (1980). The study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do Batswana Catholics understand and live conversion?
2. What precisely does conversion mean for them?
3. What is the best way to understand conversion in Africa today?

The methods that Rambo and Costas employ in their writings have shaped both the research method and technique of this study. Let me explain these briefly.

1.5.1. Rambo's holistic method

According to Rambo, conversion is a complex, multifaceted process involving personal, cultural, social and religious dimensions. While conversion can be triggered by particular events and, in some cases, result in very sudden experiences of change, for the most part it takes place over a period of time (Rambo 1993: 165). Certain contemporary theologians, wrote Rambo, believe that genuine conversion transpires over an entire lifetime. Orlando Costas is one such theologian, since he wrote: "Christian conversion is a journey into the mystery of the Kingdom of God which leads from one experience to another" (Costas 1980:182). When people change in their religious life - for whatever reason and whether
change is permanent or temporary - they go through various stages (Rambo 1993: 165). Rambo points out, however, that one could also view these as dimensions of a system, rather than as stages of a linear process. For this reason he speaks of a systemic-stage model of conversion. The following seven elements make up the stages or system: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences.

First of all, a context plays an important part in conversion. A person's context is the most comprehensive and dynamic force field in which his or her conversion takes place. Macro context is the total environment - the larger context of the person - which could be the economic, political, religious or cultural atmosphere. Micro context is the immediate environment, the world of family and friends, clan and neighbourhood. Forces of resistance and attraction are very active in context, which is the most comprehensive stage of conversion.

Secondly, the experience of crisis provides an opportunity for new options. Some form of crisis - religious, political, psychological or cultural - usually precedes conversion. A crisis such as a mystical experience, a near-death-experience, fear or loneliness can initiate conversion. Crisis forces individuals and groups to confront their limitations and can stimulate a quest to resolve conflict, fill a void, adjust to new circumstances or find avenues of transformation.

Quest is an active search for new options, solutions to problems, meaning, purpose and transcendence. Quest is, to some degree, influenced by a person's emotional, intellectual, or religious availability. This brings us to the question why people convert. The motivations to convert are multiple, complex, interactive and cumulative, for example, the need to experience pleasure and avoid pain, self-esteem, relationships, power over death, control of one's life, etc (Rambo 1993:167).

The next stage, encounter, focuses on the meeting between the 'advocate', who offers new options, and the potential convert, who is actively searching. This encounter is always
dialectical in nature, and seldom leads to conversion. Advocates formulate persuasive tactics while potential converts, as active agents, are also skilful in seeking out what they want and rejecting what they do not desire.

Through the stage of Interaction potential converts are introduced to the world of meaning and practices typical to the new group. They form new relationships, practise the ritual and rhetoric of the new community and are given new roles. Discipleship, the relationship with the advocate, is important. Intensified interaction such as the “Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults” (cf.3.3.1.4), leads potential converts to a point where they make a commitment, which is the next stage or dimension of conversion.

Commitment marks a specific turning point in the form of a dramatized, commemorated public demonstration that bears witness to the convert’s decision. Decision-making is an integral part of the commitment stage and is often the occasion for an intense and painful confrontation with self. An example of decision making found in the biblical tradition is in Deuteronomy (30:15-20). Rituals, as part of the commitment stage, are powerful methods by which learning takes place. Baptism in Christianity, for example, is an explicit, experiential process by which one declares the old life to be dead and the new life to be born (cf. Romans 6:3-4). Surrender is “total submission to God” as in the statement of Paul in Galatians 2:20. The five most common elements of the commitment stage are a) decision-making, b) rituals, c) surrender, d) testimony manifested in language transformation and biographical reconstruction, and e) motivational reformulation (Rambo 1993:124). Rambo concludes that commitment is the consummation of the process of conversion (:168).

Throughout the process of change, there are various consequences of conversion. They become obvious as the process unfolds. For some it is a radically transformed life; others gain a sense of mission and purpose; others gain a quiet sense of security and peace. The conversion process can, however, also have a destructive effect. One may find that the new orientation is not what one expected. Assessment and evaluation are complex and the criteria
are determined by and within a particular religious community or tradition. We can delineate five approaches to the exploration of consequences: a) the role of personal bias in assessment, b) general observation, c) an in-depth look at socio-cultural and historical consequences, d) psychological consequences, and e) theological consequences of conversion. Assessment of the consequences of conversion necessarily embodies both descriptive and normative elements.

Rambo’s model of understanding religious conversion, which acknowledges the complexity of the subject, brings together the cultural, social, personal and religious aspect of the person who experiences change, and therefore understands the subject in its richness and complexity. This holistic model with its seven stages, is a systemic stage model and it offers a variety of dimensions which one can use as a framework to analyse people’s experiences of change. However, Rambo acknowledges that the model is not yet a complete theory, but only a starting point. This study uses the seven stages of the systemic model as framework for interviews (Appendix: 2) and as a guideline for theological reflection (chapter 3).

1.5.2. Costas’ spiral model.

I have already mentioned that Costas (1980) views conversion as a dynamic, complex, ongoing experience, profoundly responsive to particular times and places, and shaped by the context of those who experience it. First, he suggested a concentric model, which describes the conversion experience as three concentric circles. The centre is Christ, and the first circle represents conversion to Him; the second circle represents conversion to culture and the third conversion to the world (1980:176). Costas used a case-study method of his own conversion experience as a basis for reflection. He shared with a friend his three-fold conversion experience, to which his friend responded. “So you think those will be your only conversions?” This was the beginning of the reflection that led Costas to change his concentric model to a spiral one. The ongoing conversions indicate, as Costas (1980:182) discovered, that conversion is “a plunge into an eschatological adventure where one is
confronted with ever new decisions, turning points, fulfilments and promises which will continue until the ultimate fulfilment of the Kingdom”. In his theological evaluation, Costas reflects that conversion is a distinct moment and a continuous process, a socio-ecclesial reality and a missional commitment (:182-187).

This study combines the two models of Rambo and Costas: while the seven stage systemic model applies to any religious conversion experience, the spiral model applies specifically to conversion within Christianity. In order to analyse and interpret the understanding of conversion among Batswana Catholic, I have therefore combined these two approaches.

1.6. Empirical investigation.

1.6.1. St Peter’s Parish of Tlhabane.

The parish in which I conducted my research, St. Peter’s Tlhabane, was founded in 1960, and is a black urban Setswana-speaking parish. It is made up of ± 600 families, 90% of whom use Setswana as home language. It belongs to the young diocese of Rustenburg which became a diocese (local church) in 1987, before which time it was an independent region of the Pretoria diocese under the care of the Redemptorist congregation.

1.6.2. The origins of the research project.

The Redemptorist “mission preaching” team took over St Peter’s parish for two weeks towards the end of 1993. I was part of the team and we broke away from the traditional model of “mission preaching”. The model we adopted was in line with the Pastoral Plan of the Diocese (local church). What happened in the two weeks is that neighbourhood groups (NGG) were formed, leaders chosen and trained to lead the groups in gospel sharing; meetings were set up where these leaders led the people in Bible sharing following the seven steps (Appendix:2). During the last weekend of the two weeks, after the team had visited all
parishioner's homes and met in Small Christian Communities 6, an all-night vigil took place in the church, concluding with the celebration of mass (Eucharist). Many aspects of Batswana culture were brought in and incorporated into the Mass, to give concrete expression to the need for the inculturation of liturgy (cf.4.2.3.1).

It was after this experience in the Parish of St Peter's that I decided to research the responses of the parish members in this study. Their response to the experience of the “mission” and the questions they asked inspired me. On the Sunday after the two weeks’ “mission”, I asked some people to stay behind after the service. The Parish council members and the SCC leaders were invited specifically to be there, but the rest of the congregation was given an option. These then filled in an evaluation questionnaire on the "mission" (Appendix:1). 64 people filled in the evaluation form. A large amount of information was collected, but it was not specific enough to meet the requirement of this study. This encouraged me to do in-depth structured interviews among this group, to ascertain their perception and experiences of conversion. This, however, raised the question of sampling.

1.6.3. Sampling

Two weeks after the “mission” I met with the people who had filled in the evaluation forms and from them I invited some individuals - see below for the criteria I used - to take part in in-depth interviews. The times and places of the interviews were fixed at that meeting.

Rambo (1993:12) lists five different types of conversions: Apostasy or defection, Intensification, Institutional transition, Affiliation, and Tradition transition. Apostasy or defection refers to one who abandons a religion and adopts a non-religious system of values. There was nobody in the group to represent this type of conversion. However, during the

---

6Building Small Christian Communities (SCC) is a new way of being church, introduced by the change of mentality about the church which began with Vatican II. Other expressions used are: Basic Christian Communities (BCC) and Basic Ecclesial Communities, based on the Latin-American expression Comunidad Ecclesia de Base (CEB).
house visiting of the "mission" I met Gloria (2.3.1), Lucia (2.5.2) and Gladys (2.5.1), in whose conversion experiences there was an element of apostasy. They agreed to take part in the interviews. Intensification is when one intensifies one’s involvement or commitment within the religion to which one belongs. There were a good number of people who represented this type of conversion. Affiliation is when one becomes a fully-fledged member with all rights and privileges. This type also was well represented. Institutional transition is where one “converts” from one Christian denomination to another. This type of conversion is very common in this parish. Tradition transition is when one changes from one major religion to another. This type was also represented, but it is not common in this parish. I asked people who were available and willing to take part to come forward, and from the volunteers ten people were finally selected as a sample. I made this selection in such a way that the five different types of conversion mentioned above were represented in the sample. But only four of the five were represented in the parish. Apostasy was not found in the parish.

1.6.4. Questionnaire and Structured interviews.

Since Rambo’s model serves as the organizing framework for this study, the interviews followed the same framework (Appendix:1). Many of the interviews were to take place in Setswana, therefore a lot of work went into interpreting the terms of Rambo’s model into Setswana. What I discovered, when interpreting the model into Setswana, is that the crisis and quest stages are like two sides of the same coin. This applies also to the stages of encounter and interaction. Nevertheless, the study will use all seven stages in the application of the model. Rambo himself acknowledges that no model can encompass the whole of reality.

1.7 Overview of Chapters.

After describing the context of the study and the method it has adopted in chapter one, chapter two introduces the data of the study. As mentioned before, ten members of the Setswana-speaking parish of St. Peter’s Tlhabane were interviewed, and a description of these
interviews is presented in chapter two. Chapter three then analyses the data presented in chapter two by using Rambo's systemic stage model, and discusses important theological issues that arise from it. Chapter four concludes the study by evaluating the process of research, discussing the contents of the research and suggesting areas for further study.
CHAPTER TWO

2. AN ANALYSIS OF CONVERSION EXPERIENCES IN TLHABANE

This chapter presents the data collected from the ten people interviewed in Tlhabane. It is arranged according to Rambo's five different types of conversions (cf. 1.6.1); and his systemic stage model (cf. 1.5.1) is used as a framework to interpret the different conversion experiences of the interviewees. In Chapter three I will then proceed with a theological reflection.

2.1. Conversion as affiliation.

All the interviewees except Gloria (cf. 2.2.1) experienced this type of conversion. They became fully-fledged members of the Catholic Church. One becomes a fully-fledged member by receiving the sacraments of initiation, baptism, confirmation and communion. To receive these sacraments one must go through catechism classes (education in the faith). There are two ways in which people experience this type of conversion. Firstly, people who are 'born Catholics' are baptised as infants, receive holy communion at the age of reason (7 to 9 years) and confirmation after the age of 11, and all the time they participate in catechism classes. Secondly, people who are converted to Catholicism as adults, undergo adult catechesis, which since Vatican II (cf. 1.3.2) has taken the form of the 'RCIA' (cf. 3.3.1.4), and then receive all three sacraments at the same time. For 'born Catholics' this type of conversion is something done for them and to them by the family, school and/or church. They often have little or no choice in these matters. It is only later in life that these rituals become a reality to many 'born Catholics'.

2.1.1 Gerald Maleka Masinamela.

Gerald Maleka Masinamela, is a 32 year old married man with 2 children. He has high
school education and is self-employed. He came from a poor single parent family and lived in a township. His mother was eventually married and the family raised by a step-father. He was confirmed in the Lutheran Church as a young man. He later discovered that he had been baptised in the Catholic Church as an infant, but he was not allowed by his family to have anything to do with the Catholic Church. On the day he was confirmed in the Lutheran Church the congregation was attacked by some people who belonged to a rival group, so he stopped going to church. It was when he moved to Tlhabane in 1992 that he made contact with the Catholic Church, and in 1993 was received back into the Church. After leaving the Lutheran Church and before coming back to the Catholic Church, he was actively searching for his true identity. In 1987 he came across the Rastafarian movement, the members of which welcomed him, but he was not happy with them. He said: “It was when I went back to my church of origin that I found my true identity, that I was converted (thabologo)”. As far as he is concerned he was always a Catholic and when he underwent the RCIA (cf. 3.3.1.4), the faith that had always been there was being renewed and confirmed.

The macro-context of Gerald’s conversion was unemployment, having no place to live, not being accepted by the community and treated as an outsider. Gerald lost his job because of protesting against inequality in the treatment of workers. In his work place white workers used to drink tea from good cups while black workers drank from plastic cups. To defy this law he served black workers with cups reserved for whites. When he had lost his job, he had no place to live and so took refuge in the grounds of the Catholic Church. Gerald is the only one of all the interviewees who openly named his context as apartheid (cf. 3.1.1). He said: “Apartheid is not only between blacks and whites, even black people discriminate against others because they are strangers or belong to a different tribe”. Tlhabane was part of the former Bophuthatswana ‘homeland’ and as an outsider he was not accepted - even by some
members of the Church. His mother broke the secret and told him that he had been baptised as an infant in the Catholic Church by a certain Fr. Gerald in Mamelodi near Pretoria, where he was born. He knew then that he had finally found his Church. His family, which is the micro-context of his conversion, played a central role in his conversion. It was at the time of his marriage that his mother told him that he had been baptised as a Catholic and, for the sake of bringing up his children in the faith, he returned to the Catholic Church.

The crisis and quest in Gerald's life at the time was to find a place to stay and discover his true identity – which the Catholic Church eventually made available to him. He first joined a community of Rastas, for the following reason: "What made me join the Rastafarian movement is that these young men believed in themselves, worked for themselves and did not work for anyone, especially white people". Gerald was also suffering from chest pains as a result of Tuberculosis, which he had contracted as a child. The first day that he went to church and saw people go forward to receive Holy Communion, he said: "I knew that what those people were receiving is going to heal me". As a non-Catholic, he went to receive and he was healed of all his chest pains. Through the RCIA process he subsequently encountered and interacted with the leaders of the parish; it is then he met a priest who was a white man. He said: "It is the first time in my life I meet a humble and loving white man". The priest and other people in the church influenced him; and as a result of his interaction with them, he made his commitment when he was baptized in 1993.

As a consequence Gerald has experienced a deep sense of belonging and healing. He experiences the peace he never had all his life. Now he runs a programme for unemployed people and together they create employment opportunities, enjoying the support of the Church. He sees this conversion story as a journey of finding himself and his real identity.

2.1.2. Sr. Veronica Molejane.

Sr. Veronica is a religious sister ministering in the Parish of St. Peter's. She was involved in
the 'Mission' that took place in the Parish. She is 40 years of age and belongs to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Bridget. She comes from a staunch Catholic family, the fifth child of eight children. She was born and brought up in a poor and isolated rural area of the former Bophuthatswana homeland. The only health, educational and social facilities in the village were provided by the Catholic Church. She was baptized as an infant and when she was 11 years of age she was confirmed. The family played a very important role in these experiences of her life. All she could say about Baptism and Confirmation is that she had to go through them, because those are the things to be done to a child in a Catholic family.

As a teenager she had to travel a long way to the nearest clinic. There she saw how the Catholic sisters were the ones to look after the sick and the needy and that is how she became attracted to them. The Church, which was represented by the priests and the sisters, became to her a 'sign of hope' that she can overcome her situation of hopelessness and alienation. With the help of her parish priest she met two sisters who belonged to the congregation of the sisters of St Bridget. These sisters came from another province. She always wanted to be somebody special and these ladies in the characteristic green uniform of the Sisters of St Bridget seemed special. To join these sisters she had to part with her family, the people and the land she loved. She said: "For the first time in my life I had to think for myself, and ask if this is what I want with my life". This was the beginning of the process of conversion in my life. The support and encouragement of the family, their faith and prayers, were instrumental in my vocation." After two years of orientation and preparation (novitiate), she made her first profession in 1983 and her final profession in 1989. For her, the turning points of leaving home, first profession and final profession were moments of conversion, each time going deeper into the mystery of God's Kingdom (cf. 1.5.2).

The macro-context of Veronica's conversion was the overall situation of Apartheid in the country. She lived in a poor rural area where there were no health or education facilities, except those provided by the Catholic Church. Her family and parish community, which made up the micro-context of her conversion, supported and encouraged her all the time.
She experienced a real crisis when she had to leave her people and province and go to live and work in a strange place and among strangers. But she had to follow the quest in her life, to become something special. She said: "Everything from my childhood, my background, family and situation was preparing me for this life of commitment to the Lord". This life was an answer to her situation of alienation and poverty. As a consequence she discovered a life of prayer and community with other sisters, which gave her peace and purpose in life. In her ministry, she is given the opportunity to turn her primary attention from her own interests and desires and genuinely involve herself in the needs and desires of others (Conn 1986:20). She has developed a strong sense of belonging through the sisters of St Bridget – something that makes her feel special. She knows that she is wanted and accepted. She said: "Now I am free to love and serve God in and through others. There is so much work in the vineyard of the Lord and I am needed."

2.1.3. Amos Tiro Dinake

Amos is a 35 year old married man, a nurse by profession and occupation. He responded to what he thought was a call to the ordained ministry as a priest within a religious congregation. This included spiritual formation and studies in theology, philosophy, human sciences, Scripture, etc, for seven years. During his formation he had to take vows as a religious. In 1982 he took temporary vows for three years and then in 1986 he took perpetual vows (cf.1.2). In 1987, however, he decided to leave Religious life and not proceed with the priesthood. He said: "This was the moment of conversion". This could be interpreted as 'apostasy' according to Rambo or as 'conversion to culture' according to Costas. It was at this point in his life that Amos began to make deliberate choices. He did not leave the Catholic Church, but proceeded to search for his rightful place in it. This led to another conversion experience (intensification) in his life which took place in 1994 when he was elected a member of the Parish Pastoral Council.

The macro-context of Amos' conversion was the background of alienation and
discrimination caused by apartheid. The Catholic Church, which introduced him to Religious life formed part of the context. His family and parish community formed the **micro-context** by creating the atmosphere of a life of commitment. **Crisis** was caused by the confusion that came as a result of the tension in his living of religious life. For example, he came from a poor family where he lived in real material poverty, and then as a Religious he took the vow of poverty, but did not live in poverty at all. He was under pressure to decide for or against the priesthood and this presented a **crisis**. He was always questioning and searching, the **quest** to make the right decision. The two people who acted as 'advocates' in Amos' choice to become a priest were his mother and his Parish Priest. His **encounter** and **interaction** with other Religious people made him give up Religious life and priesthood. The **commitment** he made was in the form of marriage and as a member of the Parish Council. The **consequences** are that he is happy and free from the confusion caused by religious life. Now he is happy and feels responsible for the life he has chosen.

2.1.4. Conclusion

The 'Rite of infant baptism' is a rite by which infants are affiliated into the Church. They become full members of the Church, but initially all the responsibility is on their parents:

> You have asked to have your children baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith, to keep God's commandment by loving God and neighbour. Do you understand what you are undertaking? (Dickinson 1978:8).

Parents are responsible for their children's holistic growth, physical, mental, psychological etc. In having their children baptized, Christian parents are at the same time accepting the responsibility for their spiritual growth. Often 'born Catholics' become spiritually independent only much later in life, as we have seen in the lives of the three interviewees discussed above. None of them recognised the reception of the sacraments of initiation as actual moments of conversion, but merely as “things to be done” to Catholics. To affirm the
complexity of conversion, Gerald experienced conversions to culture and the world before
collection to Christ (cf. 1.5.2). Amos apostasised when he left the priesthood, which was
at the same time a conversion to culture (cf. 2.1.3). His conversion to Christ intensified
in spite of his leaving religious life and the priesthood.

2.2. Conversion as Intensification.

It is evident from the interviews that this type of conversion is what 'born Catholics' identify
as their actual moment of conversion. Since affiliation is done to them and for them,
intensification is what they do themselves, their own choice, when they intensify their
commitment within the religion to which they belong. For those who became Catholics as
adults, intensification is often another conversion experience after they become fully fledged
members (Affiliation). This evidence confirms the observation of Costas.

The repetition of conversion indicates that conversion is a plunge into an
eschatological adventure where one is confronted with ever new decisions, turning
points, fulfilments and promises which will continue until the ultimate fulfilment of
the kingdom (1980:182).

2.2.1. Geraldine Barileng Claries.

Geraldine is a 25 year old single mother with one child, herself from a single parent family
of ten. She passed Standard 10, is unemployed and a sickly person suffering from epilepsy.
She is a 'born Catholic' from a Coloured family who were living in a former "Bantu
township". Her father, a Motswana, was never married to her mother and he never lived with
the family. She never knew him or his people. When I asked her about moments of
conversion in her life she told me about two instances: the first was in 1992, when she
became a member of the woman's group called "Barwadi ba Anna" (cf. 3.3.1.2.1) and the

2The "Coloured" people of today are: a) the descendants of the original Khoi-Khoi inhabitants of South Africa; b)
slaves imported into South Africa from Indonesia, Mozambique and elsewhere; c) children born out of sexual liaison between
white colonists and Africans, who were (due to racism in the white community) not welcome among whites.
second was when she was chosen to be a leader of a SCC (cf. 3.3.1.3) in 1994. She says: “I remember my first Holy Communion (kamogelo) and Confirmation (thomamiso) well; they were special moments in my life, but the real conversion (tilhabolo) began when I became a member of ‘Barwadi ba Anna’ in 1992”. This was a deepening of her commitment (intensification): “I always felt that God was calling me to something special”. She tried to become a nun but her ill-health made it impossible, so she joined the women’s group.

The macro-context of Geraldine’s conversion was that of a single, Coloured mother who was poor and living in black area; who experienced alienation, an identity crisis, breakdown of mental and physical health, which affected her social relationships and family life. Roman Catholicism became the only way she could cope in that situation of alienation.

Her sickness (epilepsy) was the crisis that influenced her conversion. She was always searching for solutions, answers and meaning for her ill-health (quest). She encountered African traditional healers but refused to accept what they offered, because it would mean accepting ‘African identity’. She said firmly: “Ek is nie ‘Bantu’ nie” (I am not black). A traditional healer told her that she would only be healed if she became a Sangoma (cf.3.2.1), but that would also have meant giving up the Roman Catholic Church. She was then influenced by her parish priest and some prominent members of the Women’s group to join ‘Barwadi ba Anna’. She said: “It is by being close to Jesus Christ that I find meaning in life, especially for my sickness”. A life of prayer and deep faith in Christ is what Geraldine was introduced to through interaction with the women’s group. Through his suffering, Christ learned to be obedient to the Father and saved the world. Geraldine joined a group of women who followed Christ, instead of sitting at home feeling sorry for herself. She went out to visit the poor, sick and lonely. She became a "wounded healer": “I still take my pills and try to look after myself, but it is different now, Jesus has worked a miracle in my life”. After a year of orientation she made her commitment to the group when she was presented with the full uniform of ‘Barwadi ba Anna’. This took place during the celebration of the Eucharist and a special clothing ceremony was performed. The creed was proclaimed and baptismal vows
renewed.

As a consequence, Geraldine has a very strong sense of belonging and identity. Christ is the centre of her life and gives meaning to all her experiences, both good and bad. The mission of reaching out to others with love, to bring them healing, heals her too. She can cope with her situation of sickness and alienation. Walter Conn (1986:20) describes conversion as the experience of turning one's primary attention from one's own interest and desires and genuinely involving oneself in the needs and desires of others.

This conversion was followed by another two years later, when she was nominated as one of the SCC leaders in the parish. In her opinion, this conversion was the consequence of the previous one. She says: "Before, I could do nothing, because I was sick. Now there is nothing I cannot do".

2.2.2. Sophia Tumelo.

Sophia is a 39 year old divorced mother of 4 children. She is a ‘born Catholic’, a nursing sister by profession and occupation. Setswana is her home language. Sophia was brought up in a devout Catholic family. She got married to a Catholic man in the Catholic Church. The moment of truth came when she was divorced and left with four children. She said: “Everything was normal until my husband left me with four children, one of whom was a baby of twenty-one days.” In her efforts to cope with the situation she joined the Sacred Heart Sodality (cf. 3.3.1.2.2) in 1994. She had known about the sodality but never felt the need to join them. However, in the desperate situation she was in, she suddenly needed them (intensification). In 1995 she was elected a member of the Justice and Peace Commission for the diocese (intensification).

Sophia’s context as a divorcee meant that she carried a stigma (practically divorce is an unforgivable sin in Catholic thought). In society she felt a failure and for her this was a real
experience of alienation. She was an outcast, abused and exploited in patriarchal Tswana society. The crisis was presented by the fact that suddenly she was a single parent who needed support, especially with her twenty-one day old baby. She had an inner desire to join this group of women who had undergone the same experiences as herself. In this crisis her quest for meaning and purpose in life intensified. She became actively involved in looking for a way to cope with the new situation. Through encounter with people who understood her situation - who had themselves undergone the same experience - she found a sense of belonging and power. Through interaction with the Sodality she learnt how to pray and developed a relationship with God. The sign of commitment is the uniform she was given during the service by the priest as a sign of her being consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As a consequence she found new life in the Sacred Heart sodality. She now has friends: people who understand her struggle, who accept and support her.

In 1995 Sophia was elected a member of the Justice and Peace Commission for the Diocese. This moment of conversion (intensification), the deepening of her commitment, came through her involvement in a crisis situation at work. In a private hospital in the former Bophuthatswana homeland she risked her own job and security by becoming one of the chief negotiators when workers were threatened with dismissal. In the negotiations she involved all interested and relevant parties; the church, the doctors, the management and the workers themselves. She won the approval of the church and was given a scholarship to study Biblical Ethics. As a member of the J & P Commission she was in a better position to challenge any situation of injustice. For example, she had to deal with the case of a family whose child had been operated on badly by doctors and was seriously injured. The Commission made sure that the case was handled with justice and fairness. For Sophia the search continues; this is not the end. Conversion is not just a distinct moment, but also a continuous process (cf.1.5.2).
2.2.3 Conclusion

Intensification as conversion is what Costas (1980:182) experienced in his three-fold conversion, which led him to change his concentric model to a spiral one. As one becomes more and more involved or committed, one is drawn deeper and deeper into the eschatological mystery of the Kingdom. In his theological evaluation, Costas (:183-187) reflects that conversion is a distinct moment and a continuous process, a socio-ecclesial reality, and missionary commitment. Geraldine (cf. 2.2.1) and Sophia (cf. 2.2.2) experienced conversion as intensification within their Christian context in accordance with the reflection by Costas.

2.3. Conversion as institutional transition

Institutional Transition is a conversion that takes place within Christianity, that is from one denomination to another. Denominational differences are not as deeply rooted in Africa as they are in Europe. Particularly in South Africa Christianity is young and therefore still in the making. There is more tolerance between the different religions than there is between races in South Africa.

2.3.1 Gloria Tiny Moagi.

Gloria is a 46 year old housewife with a high school education. She has 5 children and got married to a Catholic man in a Catholic Church with herself being an Anglican. She lives in Tlhabane and her home languages are Setswana and Afrikaans, since she comes from the background of Coloured people. In 1970 she married her children’s father who was a Catholic and a Motswana. She said, “I must follow my husband, that is how I was brought up” (cf. 3.1.2.1). So, she went over to her husband’s people and religion: “I do not mind to become ‘Bantu’ for the sake of my husband; he is my children’s father and I love him”. And as for religion, there is only one God and all the different churches pray to him, besides, the
Anglican and the Catholic churches are the same to me”.

In 1970, when Gloria got married to Peter, she officially left the Anglican Church and joined the Catholic Church. This is the kind of conversion Rambo calls institutional transition. The socio-cultural, political and religious context influenced this change in her life. The crisis was caused by having children outside of marriage and the social stigma attached to that. Emotional ties to Peter dominated her quest for meaning and purpose, even though she was an active agent in the decision to change. The first encounter took place during her own wedding celebration, when she was given special permission by the priest to receive Holy Communion together with her husband. Then she went through the stage of interaction where she was introduced to the faith by a catechist (cf. 3.3.1.1). She became a member of the Adult Catechesis (RCIA) (cf. 3.3.1.3). It was at this stage that she experienced problems. She was a victim of a mokatekisi’s abuse of power, because instead of letting her complete the catechetical programme in one year, he kept her back for three years. What she could not tolerate was when mokatekisi refused to have her children baptized (cf. 3.3.1.1). She and her husband agreed that she would go back to her former Church (‘apostasy’ when seen from the viewpoint of the Catholic Church), where she was welcomed and resumed her status immediately. For her this was a renewal of her Commitment. The consequence was that the children were baptised and she was happy to be home where she belongs. Although her husband remained a Catholic, he was supportive and understanding of her move.

2.3.2. Conclusion.

People can often be induced, encouraged, prevented, or forced to either accept or reject conversion on the basis of factors external to the individual (Rambo 1993:21). Gloria’s Institutional Transition suddenly became apostasy when she returned to her Church of origin. But, for her, this is the same process of conversion that began in the Anglican Church, continued in the Catholic Church and led her back to the Anglican Church again. What is important to her is that both are Christian Churches, which raises the question of the
significance of denominational differences among Batswana. Moving from one denomination to another is not a major change for Batswana, because they frequently attend each other's services during important events such as funerals, weddings, prayer services, etc.

2.4. Conversion as Tradition Transition

According to the Catholic Church, the distinction between Institutional and Tradition transition is expressed in the form of initiation. A convert who has already been baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, is received into the church. But those baptized in any other form, like in the Name of Jesus, etc, must be baptized before being received into the church. The Catholic Church's attitude towards African Independent Churches (AICs) was and still is one of ignorance and suspicion. So, for a member of an AIC to become Catholic they must be baptized, just like non-Christians, i.e. Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. They undergo Tradition Transition in conversion.

2.4.1. Elizabeth Moitshudi Modise.

Elizabeth is a 50 year old widowed mother of 3 children, who gave up her job to look after her aged mother. She has lived in Tlhabane since 1968 and is a member of St. Peter's Parish. She came from a poor family and her parents were farm labourers. The family belonged to an African Independent Church called 'Pentecost Holiness Church of Healers'. The leaders of the church were the elders of the family.

When her grandfather died there was a dispute among the remaining elders, which led to the division of the church and its subsequent dissolution. Her family had to leave the farm and her parents found work at Boys Town, a Catholic Institution, where they also found a place to live. The Catholic Church was the only Church in the place and all who lived there attended it, so her family also started attending. She never became a Catholic officially but she was so involved in the Church that everyone thought she was a Catholic. It was only
when she moved to Tlhabane in 1968 that she officially became a Catholic, was baptised, confirmed and received into the Church (Tradition Transition). Her husband was a Lutheran, but they got married in the Catholic Church.

In 1980 she became very ill (ukufa kwabantu). She understood this as a sign from the ancestors to return to her Church, especially because the sickness was accompanied by dreams of her elders. She woke up in hospital one day, only to find her parish priest praying by her bedside. She had just been dreaming of her grandfather telling her to follow her priest, so she understood that as confirmation by her ancestors that she was in the right Church. In 1993 she joined one of the women’s groups in the church, namely St. Anne’s Sodality (cf. 3.3.1.2.2.) (intensification).

In the context of Apartheid, a poor black family of farm workers family was the lowest form of existence, but the Catholic Church became a place of refuge for them. The situation of her family brought her into contact with the Church. Elizabeth fell very ill, which was a major crisis in her life. In her quest for healing she was diagnosed by a traditional healer as being possessed by an ancestral spirit who wanted her to become a sangoma. Then she was taken to the hospital where she was taken care of by Catholic nuns and priests. Personal encounter with priests was very important because she discovered love. The priests were foreigners and the church was foreign but for the first time in her life she was treated respectfully as a human being. When in hospital she was in a coma and dreamt of a priest and when she recovered the priest of her dream was sitting next to her bed. She was convinced that her ancestors had led her in that way to the Catholic Church. Through this interaction she was led to a deeper form of commitment to the Church, when she became a member of the Women of St. Anne's (intensification). And she practises her ministry of faith healing, discernment and counselling within the Church. As a consequence she found healing for herself, and spiritual enrichment in her new life in the church.
2.4.2. Francinah Motsatsi.

Francinah is a 37 year old married mother of 5 children. She has high school education and is employed as a domestic worker. She is a Motswana from Botswana who came to Tlhabane in 1979. Her parents belonged to no religion or church. It was when she went to school that she was introduced to the Catholic Church - she followed the example of her own brothers and sisters - and became a Catholic in 1974. This conversion is another example of what Rambo calls Tradition Transition. She came from a very poor family and as a result she was a very sad person. She said: “I believed that there was nothing good about life and about me”.

A lady friend introduced her to the Sacred Heart Sodality (cf. 3.3.1.2.2), which she joined in 1989 (intensification). She had a mystical experience during which she felt a tremendous sorrow for her sins. In a dream she was shown a strange place in Lesotho to which she had to go. She went looking for the place and found it. It was a Retreat House in the mountains of Lesotho. She joined a group of people who were on retreat for a week. On the second day she had an apparition of a man who told her that God wanted her to work in the Church as a healer and counsellor. Later she found out that the man was St. Gerard, the saintly priest who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1989. Thus she received her call as a faith healer and counsellor (intensification).

Coming from a context of extreme poverty, a large family and unemployed parents, Francinah’s only hope of being educated was to go to a Catholic school. It was the only school in the area and was run by nuns and priests. She was educated in the Catholic faith and received the sacraments. Depression was a major crisis in her life and very often she was sick. Her quest for healing led her to encounter people who helped her find deep meaning in her faith. She went to a traditional healer who told her that her healing was in her church. A friend introduced her to the Sacred Heart Sodality. Her parish priest was her director through the stage of interaction. For one year she was a pre-novice ‘Mokokoti’ and then a
'Novice' for another year, after which she was given the uniform 'Seaparo', a sign of her commitment, and became a full member of the Sodality. Consequently she had a mystical experience where she felt a tremendous sense of sorrow for her sins. This led to yet another experience of conversion. She said, "Now I am at peace because I know what God wants me to do and I am prepared to do it, I have my vocation in life". Francinah is now a counsellor and spiritual healer (mosebeletsi) and practises her ministry within the spirituality of the Sacred Heart Sodality. Francinah's conversion experience is a challenge to both the leadership of the church and to those with similar experiences, who usually decide to leave the church.

2.4.3 Conclusion

Elizabeth was converted from an African Independent Church, while Francinah came from a non-religious family, but they were both treated, by the Catholic Church, as non-Christians. Nevertheless, Daneel (1987:32) following Turner and Sundkler, gives two categories of Independent Churches as the pre-Christian movement and the Christian movement: "An Independent Church is a new movement arising from the interaction between a tribal community and its religion on the one hand, and a heterogenous foreign culture intruding with its (Christian) religion on the other”. Independent churches are Christian in their own right and in spite of missionary Christianity. In the spirit of Vatican II, the mission of the Church is Ad Gentes, it reaches out to other religions and churches in openness and acceptance. The church has discovered that it can learn a lot from AIC's about how to Africanize Christianity and found the Church that is truly African. Both Elizabeth and Francinah, in spite of their background and experiences of ill health (ukufa kwabantu), managed to settle in the Catholic Church and, through the help of sodalities, found and practised their ministries in the Church.

2.5. Conversion as Apostasy / defection

According to Rambo, leaving one's religion and adopting a non-religious system of values is
also a type of conversion. This depends on how one understands religion. In general African spirituality perceives life as a whole, whereas Western spirituality emphasizes the dualism between the sacred and the profane. Apostasy here is not understood as adopting a non-religious system of values but rather as leaving one’s religious system, in this case leaving the Catholic Church. The following interviewees illustrate this type of conversion.

2.5.1 Gladys Bakhailelani Makhuba.

Gladys is a 42 year old mother of 4 children. She came from a poor family of 12 who belonged to an Independent Christian Zion Church (not the popular ZCC). In 1973 she was married to her husband who belonged to the Ethiopian Christian Church and was a practising 'Ngaka ya Ditaola' (doctor of bones) (cf. 3.2.1). After their marriage they decided to leave their respective churches and convert to the Catholic Church. She said: "The Catholic Church was our hope to have our children educated". It was in 1980 that they were received into the church (Tradition Transition).

Another conversion experience (Intensification) occurred when she joined the Sacred Heart Sodality in 1983. In 1994 she received the call of the ancestors to become a Sangoma and left the Church (Apostasy). At the time of the interview she was in the process of becoming a sangoma (go twasa). Her husband, who had left the Church himself, was supervising her training to be a sangoma. She was very ill, had disturbing dreams and the Catholic Church could not help her. Now she knows that it was a sign of her call to be a ‘Ngaka ya ditlhare’ (Herbalist) and ‘Mosebeletsi” (faith Healer).

The context of Apartheid, poverty and alienation is the background that influenced Gladys to convert to the Catholic Church. She said: "When I became a Catholic it was so that my children can receive good education, but the conversion was genuine because I really came to know the Catholic faith and to love it. The reason why I had to give up the faith is because I was possessed by an ancestral spirit (ke na le Badimo) (cf. 3.2.1) and I learned that the
Catholic Church will never accept me”. The crisis was brought about by a sickness that always attacked her when she was in the church. The quest for healing and meaning took her to the priest who was a foreigner and could neither understand nor help her. She encountered traditional healers who explained to her that the spirit of the ancestor who possessed her does not want her to enter the “White man’s church” until she has completed her training as a traditional healer. She was still in training and was not allowed to leave the place during the training, that is why she could not come to the vigil (cf. 4.2.3.1). The stage of interaction was a healing experience for her and consequently she has never been sick again and is at peace. She accepted this as her commitment at this point in her life and she is open to whatever happens in the future, which is in God’s hands.

2.5.2 Lucia Hartley.

Lucia Hartley is a 56 year single mother of two children, one of whom was adopted. She works as a ‘Ngaka ya ditaola’ (a doctor of bones). She is a ‘born Catholic’ and was educated in a Catholic School. Her mother was Coloured and her father was a Motswana, but she uses her mother’s surname. Under apartheid, being a Coloured gave one a better or higher status than being a Motswana. She moved to Tlhabane and was a member of St. Peter’s parish until 1983 when she fell ill (an "African disease") and was told by a traditional healer that she was possessed by an ancestral spirit (o na le badimo). She had to ‘train as a Sangoma’ (ukutwasa) at many different places: Venda, KwaNdebele and Klipgat. She now uses herbs, water and prayer, as well as bones (ditaola). She was given a new name, Tamayo, a name of one of her ancestors. She said, “I never went to talk to my priest about all these experiences, because I knew that, as far as the Church is concerned, I cannot be a sangoma and a Catholic at the same time. But I am waiting for the time when I can go back to the church without having to give up my call as a sangoma”. She said: "I do not go to church, but I am a Catholic and nothing can change that”.

Lucia was influenced and affected by the macro-context of Apartheid as well as of the whole
African worldview. She said, “By using my mother’s surname and denying my father’s people, I made my ancestors angry, so they gave me this call to keep me in my proper place”. The crisis she experienced was in a form of sickness, visions, disturbing dreams and some form of anti-social behaviour (cf.3.2.1). The quest for healing, meaning and purpose resulted in her accepting her true identity, that is, the worldview of her father, his people and his culture. Encounter and interaction took place in Lucia’s upbringing through Catholic education and schooling. She has a deep sense of commitment to the church. On the other hand her encounter and interaction with her father’s people and culture brought about a very deep sense of commitment to her call as a sangoma. As a consequence of her conversion Lucia is a successful and popular traditional healer who uses ‘holy water’ from the church. She said: "I cannot go into the Catholic Church because something bad will happen to me, but I send my daughter to fetch me holy water which I use to heal people". She believes that one day she will be able to go to church without having to give up her call as a sangoma. Lucia represents one of the greatest challenges to the church and missionary Christianity today, namely the reality of African and cultural forces within and around the African church.

2.5.3. Conclusion

Religious conversion sometimes involves apostasy. When a person changes from one denomination to another or one major religion to another they are converting to one and defecting from another. Gladys (cf. 2.5.1) for example, converted to Catholicism and then later defected and became a member of an Independent Church. She said: "I cannot go back to the Catholic Church because I must follow my husband." Lucia (cf. 2.5.2) was a fully-fledged member of the Catholic Church who changed to embrace African religious values. Her conversion to culture unfortunately excluded her conversion to Christ. In the experience of Lucia we see the confrontation between African and Western worldviews. Unlike Geraldine (cf. 2.2.1), she accepted her culture and was not ashamed of it. The difference between Elizabeth and Francinah on the one hand and Lucia on the other is that they were
converts while she was a 'born Catholic.' They challenged the Church while she was afraid and stayed away. She believes that she is a member of the church, but does not enjoy any of the rights or privileges of its membership.

This chapter has been primarily descriptive in nature, describing the conversion experiences of ten people by means of a combination of Rambo's stage model and Costas' spiral model. The next step in the logic of this study is to move on to theological reflection on these conversion experiences.
CHAPTER THREE

3. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE TEN CONVERSIONS.

3.1. The contexts of conversion.

There is strong evidence in the previous chapter that the contexts of the ten people interviewed had the greatest influence on their conversion experiences. The macro-context of South Africa was, during the formative period of these conversions, a situation of racial discrimination, economic exploitation and oppression. Today we are still reaping the fruits of the apartheid system, even though most of its legal structures have been dismantled. Apartheid, the system that controlled every aspect of an individual's life, affected even the micro context of the interviewees, that is, their neighbourhood, family, relations and personal lives. It was indeed a 'total onslaught' (Nolan 1988:75).

3.1.1. The macro context of apartheid.

People are influenced by the dynamic force field of the context in which they live. Tlhabane existed within the total environment of Apartheid. Albert Nolan (1988:71) writes, "South Africa is like North America on the one hand in its European settlement and industrialization; on the other hand it is like Africa and Asia with its majority of indigenous poor people". An estimated 1.43 million people in South Africa (Including the former homelands) live in dire poverty (Connor 1985:20). Tlhabane belonged to the homeland of Bophuthatswana, which was specially created for Batswana people: "Thus, for Africans of South Africa, it is claimed that one cannot talk of African nationalism, but of Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Tswana, etc, nationalisms" (Magubane 1982:2).

This is what apartheid was, racial segregation which was political, economic, religious and also affected one's personal and psychological life: "This system was known by many names like
racial capitalism, state capitalism, internal colonialism, etc” (Nolan 1988:75). Long before the apartheid system became law, Western or missionary Christianity and colonialism came to South Africa. Waruta (1991:81) writes: “Both Western Christianity and colonialism remain as inseparable as two sides of the same knife blade. These white creatures (Balungu) came to Africa to explore, control and conquer the natives.” This is what apartheid achieved, but not without dire consequences: “Apartheid has brought us nothing but alienation, inhumanity, suffering, violence and death” (Nolan 1988:83).

3.1.1.1. The macro context of extreme poverty.

The most characteristic feature of the apartheid system is racism (:69). There were four different ‘racial groupings’ in South Africa who were forced to live separately (1950 Group Areas Act). The basic division was between the minority of whites, who had all the economic and political power, and the majority of blacks who were poor and powerless. Somewhere in between were Indians and Coloureds. The Black majority were used for labour and, if they worked, their income was below the minimum subsistence level. Consequently, their basic human needs of food, shelter, education, medical attention etc. could not be met (Connor 1985:20). All ten interviewees were affected by the situation of poverty. Francinah (cf. 2.4.2) speaks painfully about the poverty in her family for as long as she can remember. She said: “For the best part of the month there was no food in the house. We went to sleep hungry”. Gerald (cf. 2.1.2) had no place to live, no shelter. He was unemployed and had no income. Elizabeth’s family (cf. 2.4.1), who were farm labourers, could only live on the farm as long as their father worked for the farmer. Sophia (cf. 2.2.2) had no shelter for her family after her husband divorced her and abandoned the family.

The Old Testament idea of the chosen people was abused to support apartheid. Like the

---

3Farm workers and Domestic Workers in apartheid South Africa had no workers' rights at all. Their master gave them a place to stay as a favour and for convenience. Farm workers, in particular, would live on a farm for many generations, as long as at least one member of the family worked on the farm. They were at the mercy of the farmer.
Israelites, the Afrikaners believed that they were chosen by God and given South Africa as their Promised Land. But the truth was that apartheid was evil, it gave birth to alienation, inhumanity, suffering, violence and death. "I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:20). Apartheid was in direct contradiction with the Biblical doctrine of Imago Dei: "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them". St Paul in the Letter to the Galatians (3:28), wrote: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female - for you are all one in Christ Jesus," and then (in verse 29) he goes on to say: "Simply by being Christ's, you are that progeny of Abraham, the heir named in the promise.

3.1.1.2. The macro-context of Catholic Christianity

Although missionary Christianity was closely associated with colonialism, in South Africa it became a sign of hope for many who suffered under the system of apartheid. The Catholic Church was the macro-context of the conversion of the ten interviewees. It provided them with the economic, political, religious and cultural atmosphere that proved conclusive to conversion. Geraldine (cf. 2.2.1) says that she owes her education and health to the Catholic Church. Through schools and hospitals run by Catholic sisters, priests and brothers, many of the interviewees experienced conversion. Veronica (cf. 2.1.2) says that the nuns who came to her village and looked after the sick inspired her and that is why she is a nun today. Lucia (cf.2.5.2) and Gladys (cf.2.5.1) spoke of how as poor families they were given food by the priests. It made sense to them to become Catholics, to become part of this Church that cares about people. Catholic education and educators also influenced Amos' conversion (cf. 2.1.3).

3.1.1.3. Macro context and Conversion

Poverty, forced removals, racial discrimination, violence, suffering, death, etc. were among the many experiences of the interviewees. This was the context in which the ten conversions took place. For the interviewees the Catholic Church was a way out of the situation, a means
to alleviate the suffering or to cope with it. The church provided food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, hospitals and clinics for the sick, schools for the students who could not afford it, and faith and hope to those alienated and without hope.

The macro-context, the total environment which for our interviewees was the Apartheid situation, Missionary Christianity in the form of Catholicism, as well as the African worldview, played an important role in their conversion experiences. Social relationships were destroyed and family life broken down in the face of Apartheid. Elizabeth (cf. 2.4.1) said: “We were born in poverty and to suffer, and we will die in it - but things will get better one day, in heaven, I guess.” She finds comfort in a song sung in church meetings of women “Hamba nhliziyo yam, uye ezulwini, akukho ukuphumla lapha emhlabeni”. (Go, my heart, go to heaven, there is no rest here on earth). This is a consequence of conversion: faith and hope in the face of suffering and death.

Black Christians in South Africa towards the end of the 1800's began to realize that the central message of the gospel is not what the missionaries brought them (Ngcokovane 1984:7). They began seeking African forms of Christianity. Men like Shembe taught and preached a God who loves and who has compassion, and Mzimba taught that blacks also have a right to represent themselves and their concerns before God. This black church movement upheld the relationship between the black struggle for liberation and black theology, and marked the origin of African Independent Churches, which are Christian in their own right, and in spite of missionary Christianity.

The Catholic Church has always been against apartheid, in principle. It was in an 1957 statement that the Catholic Bishops declared apartheid to be "intrinsically evil". They said: "The government's policy has created hate and madness. It has done its satanic work well" (in Pastoral Letter SACBC 1986). The Catholic Church, in declaring apartheid to be evil, was itself challenged to do some soul-searching and truly dissociate itself from apartheid. Otherwise it would be a case of the pot calling the kettle black. The people in the situation
of oppression experienced cultural stress, which presented them with a crisis and, in their quest to resolve the unfavourable situation, they were attracted to the Catholic Church, which presented them an alternative. To understand the conversions of the interviewees we must study their whole context.

3.1.2. The micro context of the family

Micro context is the immediate environment, the world of family and friends, clan and neighbourhood: “The idea of the individual in relation to marriage and family life is deeply rooted in African thinking” (Mbiti 1992:115). African religion is part of the African heritage and it belongs to the people (:13). In traditional African societies religion or African spirituality is viewed as a means for persons and communities to deal with their human conditions, particularly life-threatening events experienced during the course of life (Waruta 1991:87). Since apartheid was a total onslaught (cf. 3.1), that is, affected every aspect of individual, family and community life, it destroyed family life, social relationships and “ubuntu” (the Nguni word for the traditional African experience of humanness).

3.1.2.1. Marriage and family life.

The traditional African view of life is holistic, which means that there is no separation between the sacred and the secular. Life begins before birth (embryonic), then goes through the world (terrestrial) and carries on after death (spiritual). An African family is made up of members from all three these ‘layers’ of life: the deceased or ‘living dead’, the living, and the unborn. Another significant feature of the culture, particularly of African tribes in South Africa, is that it is patriarchal. This comes up now and again in the conversions of some interviewees like Gloria (cf. 2.3.1) and Lucia (cf. 2.5.2).

What makes marriage and child bearing so important is that it is commanded by God, it is a sacred duty and it is the meeting point of the three layers of life (Mbiti 1992:104). Closely
related to family is the issue of land and cattle: “In the three so-called 'Kaffir wars' of 1835, 1847 and 1851, the British set out to reduce the Xhosa to impotence by systematic invasion and confiscation of their lands and cattle. This was to deprive the Africans of all means of independent livelihood” (Magubane 1982:13).

Black people, who were more than 80% of the total population, lived on 13% of the land. They could only come to white areas to sell their labour. Former homelands were in fact cheap labour camps. The migrant labour system forced families to live apart and marriages were broken down: “Nearly a third of all African households in the metropolitan areas, and two-thirds in the Bantustans are headed by women. Women in all South African communities have been either the victims of traditional patriarchal customs or the legacy of colonialism and slavery” (Govinden 1991:180f). Among the many reasons why women formed and joined Christian women's organizations (Manyano) were their determination to cope with separation from their loved ones, poverty, identity crisis, alienation, suffering, etc; in other words, the total legacy of apartheid.

In African life, we cannot speak of marriage in isolation. We must always speak in terms of marriage and family life, because an individual does not exist alone (“Motho ke motho ka batho” - a person is a person through other persons). In missionary Christianity marriage is seen as a contract between two individuals, while in an African worldview it is the families who are getting married. For the Catholic Church a valid marriage contract cannot exist between baptized persons without its being by that very fact a sacrament. Sacraments are very important to Catholics, they are a point of contact with Jesus Christ and communication with God (Hlatshwayo 1995:78). According to Canon Law (1055 par 2), the essential properties of marriage are: the well-being of the spouses, procreation, the unity of the spouses and indissolubility. African customary forms of marriage, which include polygamy, are not accepted by the Church as valid marriages.
3.1.2.2. Micro-context and Conversion

There is no doubt that the micro-context of family influenced the conversion experiences of all the interviewees. Geraldine (cf. 2.2.1) comes from a single parent family. Her parents did not live together because of racial segregation. Her father is a Motswana and her mother a Coloured. The family lived in a predominantly Setswana speaking area. The Church provided what her family was unable to give her. This is why she joined the women’s group called “Barwadi ba Anna”. Veronica (cf. 2.1.1) and Amos (cf. 2.1.3) joined religious congregations through the encouragement and expectation of their families. Amos then left because of the pressure to get married. Gerald (cf. 2.1.2) experienced a personal identity crisis because of family life. Sophia (cf. 2.2.2) experienced conversion because of divorce, while Lucia (cf. 2.5.2) had to choose between the Church and the call of the ancestors to be a sangoma.

Gloria (cf. 2.3.1.) is married to a Catholic man. She was in the process of becoming a Catholic, but decided to go back to the Anglican Church, due to the influence of marriage and family. After Gladys (cf. 2.5.1) and her husband got married, they decided to leave their respective churches and join the Catholic Church. She subsequently left the church because she chose to become a sangoma. Francinah (cf. 2.4.2) was encouraged by her brothers and sisters, who attended a Catholic school, to become a Catholic. Marriage and family issues therefore influenced the conversions of all the interviewees. Marriage and family are at the heart of African life and heritage. The disruption of family life and marriage by the migratory labour system, causing the separation of husbands from their wives, resulted in divorce and the breakdown of families and marriages.

Have you not read that the Creator from the beginning made them male and female and that he said: This is why a man leaves his father and mother and become attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh? They are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh. So then, what God has united, human beings must not divide (Matthew 19:3-6).
The family is the basis of any society, and the two people - a man and a woman united in love (marriage) - are at the foundation of the family. The apartheid system destroyed family life and therefore the society, a direct violation of God's plan. Today we are reaping the bitter fruits of apartheid.

3.2. The Crisis and Quest of Conversion.

Some form of crisis often precedes conversion. The experience of a religious, political, psychological or cultural crisis can make an individual consider new options. We cannot say for sure that a crisis actually causes conversion, but it certainly influences it. Quest is an ongoing process of building meaning, looking for resources that offer growth and development to 'fill the void', solve the problem, or enrich life. Under abnormal or crisis conditions, such as illness, near-death-experience, pathology, etc, this process is greatly intensified (Rambo 1993:56): “Religious conversion may occur as a response to class oppression in which one social class or ethnic group oppresses another” (McKinney 1994:149).

3.2.1. Pathology as a crisis and the quest for healing

Health and wealth are some of the basic concerns in African life. Every person born into an African family has their place and mission (duty) in the family and society. The whole universe is in harmony and it is important for one to keep in harmony with it by being in the right place and doing one's duty. Members of the family in the spiritual world (ancestors) have the charge of keeping the harmony in the universe and protecting their whole families against possible dangers, with the cooperation of the members of the family in this world. The experience of disaster, ill health, poverty, wars, etc., are signs of disharmony in the universe. Pathology as a crisis and the quest for healing is part of conversion. Geraldine (cf. 2.2.1) has epilepsy and the family tried everything to find a solution and healing. She found peace and meaning in life when she joined “Barwadi ba Anna”. Gerald (cf. 2.1.2), who
suffered chest pains from Tuberculosis, was miraculously cured when he received Holy Communion. Lucia (cf. 2.5.2), who became a *sangoma*, was free from her hallucinations, confusion and sickness. Gladys (cf. 2.5.1) was also freed from her sickness when she became a *sangoma*.

For Elizabeth (cf. 2.4.1), the crisis began with her father’s death. She and her family went in search of a house. They were welcomed in a Catholic Church, which came as a new option, since they were also going through a religious crisis. Sophia (cf. 2.2.2) experienced the crisis of divorce, which intensified the quest to be loved and accepted. She joined the Sacred Heart Sodality. Amos (cf. 2.1.3) experienced psychological crisis, which intensified this quest to be true to himself. He left the priesthood and religious life and became a member of the parish council. Veronica (cf. 2.1.1) had to leave her home and people and go away far from her village.

3.2.1.1. African disease and healers

"African disease" (ukufa kwabantu) is a term used to describe diseases rooted in the African belief system or worldview. Spiritual forces are believed to inhabit the universe. These forces can be manipulated by human beings and used to protect or harm others. The concept of evil is more complicated in an African worldview; while for Christians it is Satan who personifies evil, for Africans it is *moloi* (the witch), who is a person, who is responsible for evil. It is believed that the influence of ancestral spirits can cause disease, as a way of communicating with certain individuals (who are being possessed by an ancestral spirit).

Kirwen (1995), in an unpublished paper given during a visit to South Africa, says: "Most missionaries, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, have never had the opportunity to study intensely African culture and religion to the point of appropriation and participation, and therefore express intolerance towards it". This area of disease and healing is the one in which they are most intolerant and ignorant. There are many different kinds of healers in the
Afrikan heritage: 1) A healer who uses herbs - (Ngaka ya ditlhare), 2) A healer of the mind - (Ngaka ya ditaola), 3) A healer of illusions - (Ngaka ya ditaola), 4) A healer who uses spiritual powers - (Sangoma), 5) A person who uses spiritual powers to harm others (Witch) - (Moloi or Umthakathi).

3.2.1.2. Dreams and conversion.

McKinney (1994:149) points out that Africans' belief in the importance of dreams relates to conversion; dreams can serve to initiate conversion or confirm it, or both. Certain dreams and visions have been important in conversions. Elizabeth (cf. 2.4.1) believes that her father spoke to her in a dream and confirmed her conversion to Catholicism. Francinah (cf. 2.4.2) was having dreams which led her to join the Sacred Heart Sodality, and it was through dreams that she was led to go to Lesotho and received her vocation as healer and counsellor. In the case of Gladys (cf. 2.5.1), her husband's many dreams eventually convinced her to leave the Catholic Church. Lucia (cf. 2.5.2) mentioned that she has many disturbing dreams but has no one to help her understand what they mean. She is still waiting for a person who can help her. Dreams are definitely influential in the conversion experiences of some of the people interviewed, and they are closely associated with the African view of life regarding the ancestors, spirit world and family (cf. 3.1.2.1).

3.2.2. Conclusion

"Wallace (1956) postulates that cultural stress, which occurs within a context of oppression, may result in one or more revitalization movements. Aberle (1962) postulates a concept similar to cultural stress when he speaks of 'relative deprivation'. For example, individuals when faced with deprivations of various types or situations which evoke fear or anxiety, do respond and, in some instances, that response may give rise to a new religious movement" (McKinney 1994:149). Women's organizations (sodalities) in different denominations fulfilled this function of coping with cultural stress or relative deprivation caused by the
labour system which separated men by taking them to the cities from the women who remained at home. Though these organizations were not originally founded for this purpose, they subsequently fulfilled this need. Crisis and quest as stages in the process of conversion are closely related to their particular context. Although they do not directly cause conversion, they certainly contribute to the process. As Rambo (cf. 1.5.1) says: "Some form of crisis precedes conversion, and in crisis quest intensifies." Crisis in the form of pathology, ill health, poverty, and broken relationships (family) preceded the conversions of most of the interviewees.

3.3. Encounter and Interaction in Conversion

People experience the stages of encounter and interaction differently. First, for the “born Catholics,” whose conversion experiences are intensification and affiliation, the advocates who influenced them were either family members, school teachers, catechism teachers, priests, sisters or brothers. Secondly, let us look at those who came into the Catholic Church through tradition transition and institutional transition. Elizabeth (cf. 2.3.1) met a priest (advocate) in hospital while sick. Francinah (cf. 2.3.2) met sisters at a Catholic school. Thirdly, those who left the Catholic Church (apostasy), were disappointed in the advocates. Gloria (cf. 2.2.1) went back to the Anglican Church because she was made to feel unwelcome by the mokatekisi. Lucia (cf. 2.1.6) and Gladys (cf. 2.3.3.) were ill (possessed by the spirit of the ancestors) and when the priest failed to help them, they were helped by traditional healers and became ‘sangomas’.

3.3.1. Roman Catholicism

Roman Catholic missionaries came to South Africa to look after the colonizers, they came from different nations to look after the spiritual needs of their own people. Gradually some missionaries made contact with the local people at the expense of their friendship with the colonial powers. The Marianhill missionaries who came to South Africa as Trappists had to
change the order completely in order to minister to the local people. What is significant about the Roman Catholic missionaries is that they lived a religious life of poverty, chastity and obedience. They were free from all family and work responsibilities and devoted all their lives to building the Kingdom of God. "There are eunuchs born so from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs made so by human agency and there are eunuchs who made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:12). This is the life that attracted Veronica (cf. 2.1.1) and Amos (cf. 2.1.3).

3.3.1.1. Leadership

From the foundation of the parish, the community of St. Peter's, like other communities in the diocese of Rustenburg, was built around priests who were foreigners - who did not understand the language and culture of the people - and who depended on one of the local parishioners, as their mouthpiece. These individuals, who helped priests with translations and explained everything to them, were known as bakatekisi (a name derived from their catechetical work of teaching and instructing converts). They also led services when the priest was not there. In St. Peter's parish a mokatekisi lived on the Church property while the priest lived elsewhere. Gloria (cf. 2.2.1) had this kind of experience where a mokatekisi used his power to make it difficult for her to join the Church. She does not know the real reason for this. Lucia (cf. 2.1.6) said that she stopped going to church because of the mokatekisi and not the priest. However, she believes that she remains a Catholic and that one day she will be able to go back to Church. It seems to me that bakatekisi became more powerful than the priest, since they controlled nearly everything in the parish community, and made most of the decisions, some of which were in contradiction of the wishes of the priest. Elizabeth (cf. 2.3.1) also experienced that kind of negative reception from a mokatekisi when she was preparing to be received into the church.

The question arises whether bakatekisi were adequately trained for the role expected from them. In fact what the priest needed was, someone who could communicate with him
reasonably, who was available when needed; and who could do the job without being paid for it. That is why some of bakatekisi were not educated. It was the responsibility of the priest to see to it that he had a place to live with his family and that his children were educated. It was only later that the responsibility was taken over by the diocese and then they were employed and paid by the diocese. In later years, the diocese has been allowing the institution of bakatekisi to die a natural death. Often their presence and activity had been an obstacle to the priests themselves in endeavouring to learn the language, culture and customs of the people. A deep knowledge of these is a necessity if the priests are to be effective leaders, according to the teaching of Christ:

You know that among the gentiles the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of man come not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25-28).

For a mokatekisi, this position was an opportunity to exercise power, an attitude that was repugnant to some potential converts, who were aware of the leadership exercised by Christ, in his ministry; as exemplified by his behaviour to the woman taken in adultery: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Go away, and from this moment sin no more" (John 8:10-11). Again this attitude was an obstacle to other members of the parish who were prepared to use their gifts and time to build the community, but were hampered by a mokatekisi who did everything himself and was not prepared to let others help him in the work.

The priest who understands the context of his ministry only through a mokatekisi, who often is not adequately trained for the ministry, must himself be, perforce, inadequate. Therefore priests need to be immersed into the context of their ministry. That means to learn the language and culture of the people to whom they minister to the point of appropriation and participation.
3.3.1.2. Sodalities

In the church there are many different spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit. Each spiritual family, while rooted in the authentic teaching and unity of the church, has its own particular gift and contribution to make. Sodalities are for lay people and exist within a parish community under the spiritual care of the priest, following a particular spirituality. They are also organized nationally and on the diocesan level. As a result many of them are highly organized with good leaders. Some have a much wider experience of the church and make a valuable contribution to their local parishes. Many sodalities are reliable and consistent, and therefore very effective in their leadership and the type of advocacy they represent. They have constitutions that they follow closely and they have national, diocesan, and parish leadership structures. They also have diocesan and national spiritual directors who are priests.

3.3.1.2.1. St. Anne’s Sodality

St Anne’s Sodality is an organization for married women based on devotion to Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary the mother of Jesus. This devotion became popular in the early church around the third century (Hoever 1993:310). The sodality itself was founded by Fr. R. Honorat OMI in Quebec, Canada, on the 4th of May 1850, and was brought to Lesotho by Bishop Cyprian Bonhomme OMI in 1934. Today, it is found in many black parishes of the dioceses of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference. Mothers look up to St. Anne as an example of ideal motherhood, so that in imitating her they too may bring up their children to be like Mary, who brought Christ into the world.

The sodality was initially exclusively for married women, but in 1992 it responded to the challenge posed to the church by the reality of the many ‘single parents' by establishing ‘Barwadi ba Anna’, which means the daughters of Anne. This was an opportunity to share the spirituality of the sodality with those who had been excluded all along. Barwadi ba Anna are part of St Anne’s sodality but wear a different uniform to distinguish them from the main
part of the sodality. When one becomes a member of a sodality one is called to a level of commitment which is very high and one is given an opportunity to live one's faith in a realistic and practical way. The type of advocacy this sodality represents is cited in this text: "So you have faith and I have good deeds, show me this faith of yours without deeds, then! It is by my deeds that I will show you my faith" (James 2:18). The members can be seen in their uniforms, and what they do in public is a sign of faith in action.

3.3.1.2.2. Sacred Heart Sodality.

In 1895 Abbot Gerald Wolpert of Marianhill founded the Association of the Sacred Heart at Centocow Mission in the Province of Kwazulu/Natal. From there the sodality spread throughout Southern Africa. The spirit of this sodality is one of prayer and concern for the poor. It is the spirituality of the heart, which in the Old Testament is connected and related with mercy, compassion and especially love: "The thoughts of his heart are to all generations to rescue their souls from death and keep them alive in famine" (Psalm 33). In the New Testament it is particularly the Evangelists Matthew (11:28-29) and John (7:38-39) who refer to the Heart of Christ. The fathers of the early church like St Justin (100-165) and Augustine (354-430 ) were drawn to the Wounds of Jesus and saw in the open side, the wounded heart of Jesus (SACBC 1986:2). This eventually became a spirituality officially accepted and practised within the church. Today many groups of people and religious communities in many countries have adopted this spirituality that influences and controls their way of life.

Members of the Sacred Heart sodality have the responsibility to live out their Christian vocation. By living out their Christian calling, they strive in a special way to place the loving Heart of Christ at the centre of their prayer and daily life, aware that we meet Christ in the Word of God, in the Sacraments and in one another. Sophia (cf. 2.2.2), who was bearing the stigma of divorce and the burden of having to look after her children alone, encountered in her search the Sacred Heart sodality, which is based on the invitation of Christ to come and
drink: "From his heart shall flow streams of living water" (John 7:38). There was no need for her to carry her burden alone and she truly found rest for her soul. Francinah (cf. 2.4.2) had an experience of alienation and ill health and as she responded to the invitation by the members of the Sacred Heart sodality to join them, she discovered that her yoke became easy and her burden light (Matthew 11:30).

3.3.1.3. Small Christian Communities

Small Christian Communities (SCC) are sometimes called Basic Christian Communities (BCC) or Basic Ecclesial Community which is derived from the Latin American expression: *Comunidad Eclesial de Base* (Heten & Holmes-Siedle 1983:vi), or Neighbourhood Gospel Groups (NGG). They are neighbourhood communities (or communities of common interest), which are intended to be permanent and are based on 'Gospel sharing' or 'Bible sharing' and on communal action. They meet weekly in members' homes, by rotation. All Catholics, including members of associations and movements, are invited to participate. They form a network coordinated through the Parish Pastoral Council. There is no universal form for such communities, they develop differently in various environments (SACBC 1989:37).

Building SCC was one way of implementing the Pastoral Plan of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference entitled 'Community Serving Humanity' (1987). The building of these communities includes different kinds of leadership training, spiritual deepening and widening of attention to include all the needs of society. Geraldine (cf. 2.2.1) became one of the leaders of the SCC, and she sees this leadership role as one of the consequences of her conversion experience, when she became a member of 'Barwadi ba Anna'. All the other interviewees are members of the SCC and were very active during the mission (cf. 1.6.2).

3.3.1.4. Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

The word 'Catechism' in the Catholic Church is associated with faith education. As children
are brought up in faith, this is the responsibility parents take upon themselves when they have their children baptized as infants. They sent them to attend Catechism classes where Catechists teach them about their faith, using a “questions and answer method” (Penny Catechism). This has always applied to adults who were preparing to come into the church as well, but the method of the adult Catechumenate was revised by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The revised method suggested in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is that of a “Journey Catechumenate” in which the whole Christian community accompanies the catechumens on their interior journey of faith. The ‘Journey Catechumenate’ according to the RCIA has several stages or periods, leading to the actual celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.

The stages are as follows: (i) The period of “First Contact”. This is the period of inquiry where one is accepted as “friend of the church” and is informally introduced to parish groups. (ii) The period of the “Catechumenate”. When friends of the church decide to continue the journey, a rite of acceptance into the Order of Catechumens is celebrated at the beginning of a Sunday mass. This period may last 1-3 years. (iii) The period of “Purification”. The parish priest in conjunction with the catechist and sponsor discerns whether the catechumen is ready to be presented for initiation. This is the rite of Election where the catechumens are formally accepted and chosen by the bishop in the name of the church, for the final stage of preparation for initiation, and their names are entered into the parish Book of the Elect. (iv) The Sacraments of Initiation. This happens during the Easter vigil while Purification happens on 3rd, 4th and 5th sundays of Lent. (v) The period of “Deepening” takes place between Easter and Pentecost and ends in a closing celebration with the Bishop.

The RCIA is an ideal method of catechism, but has not yet reached many parishes. St Peter’s is one of the many parishes that have not yet used the RCIA well. Gloria (cf 2.2.1), for example, should not have had the negative experience and gone back to her former Church. Elizabeth (cf 2.3.1) says that she is the only one who persevered in a group of 12 catechumens. Gerald (cf 2.1.3) says that had he not known what he really wanted, he would
not have survived the catechism. Veronica (cf 2.1.2) is involved in introducing the RCIA in the parish and she says that people who become animators and leaders in the parish are mainly those who went through the RCIA process themselves and persevered.

Baptized life is life within the church, the body of Christ. This is the Church which Christ established for mission (cf.1). The church exists for mission. Its mission of evangelization is more than preaching. It is a life time journey of conversion. To be baptized is to be initiated into a way of life of justice and orthopraxis. This means living according to God's will. It is a life lived in a community, the Church (Karecki 1995:73). The initiatory pattern of the RCIA practised after the age of the apostles was: Disciple-making, baptising, teaching. This pattern characterised the initiation process of the Church until its demise in the fifth century (:72).

By the latter half of the fourth century Christianity began to be equated with heightened social status rather than discipleship (Comby 1985:45). In the face of growing numbers of converts the church shortened the preparation period for baptism and catechesis was perceived to be about education rather than conversion (Kavanagh 1978:118-120). All this development together with the church's practise of infant baptism and the baptism of large numbers; which resulted in the loss of the unity between baptism and confirmation and the practice of baptism outside of Easter season, are some of the factors that brought about the disintegration of the Catechumenate. In spite of the restoration of the Catechumenate by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Roman Church is still suffering from the effects of the dissolution of the rite of Christian initiation (Karecki 1995:85).

3.3.2. Conclusion

In St. Peter's parish Tlhabane, sodalities play a very important role. They are the powerhouses for a parish. For the Catholic Church the priest is officially the leader of the parish, but in my experience mokatekisi makes all the decisions, while the sodalities run the parish. According to the interviews sodalities are the breeding ground for conversion. They
provide individuals with an opportunity to live and understand their faith. But, because of the question of leadership (cf. 3.3.1.1), we cannot overlook the fact that these sodalities have also been places of abuse, power struggles and exploitation. This is an issue to be explored deeper in further studies.

The RCIA process brings together the stages of encounter and interaction. It is a ritualization of initiation rather than conversion. Through the RCIA the church responds to the conversion that is already in process (Searle 1990:8). Conversion in the RCIA is to life with and in the Risen Christ, a human response to the divine initiative. It is Christocentric, a participation in his paschal mystery. It is a sacramental experience, interior transformation with external support. It is also a communal process, "an encounter with the living Christ incarnate in the Church of every age" (Duggan 1978:104). It is a Spiritual Journey, a process rather than a moment or an event. It implies the transformation of the whole person (Karecki 1995:121-124). The missiological implication for the study is that in the RCIA process conversion is recognized by the church and that commitment like faith is public.

3.4. Commitment and Consequences in conversion

The Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist mark the most dramatic turning point in the process of conversion. In Acts 8:35-37, Phillip proceeded to explain the good news of Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. When they came to some water, the eunuch said, "Look, here is some water; is there anything to prevent my being baptized?" Born Catholics do not experience the Sacraments of Initiation as explicit moments of decision-making. They don't recollect their baptism, and, first Holy Communion and Confirmation are some of the rituals they must have done. Sophia (cf. 2.1.4) experienced, for the first time in her life, a moment of religious decision-making when she was divorced from her husband. Amos (cf. 2.1.5) made his own decision when he decided to leave religious life and the priesthood. For those who became Catholics as adults, the Sacraments of Initiation were indeed a moment of decision-making. Gerald (cf. 2.1.3) was "born Catholic" but had to
receive the Sacraments of Initiation as an adult. He says: “Now I have found my home, I am at peace and I am healed by the Eucharist”. Elizabeth (cf. 2.3.1) had a prolonged interaction stage. She says: “The day I was baptized I felt different, I felt at home, that feeling of being a visitor – that I used to have whenever I entered the church - disappeared”. Gloria (cf. 2.2.1) in her journey went as far as the stage of interaction but did not receive the Sacraments of Initiation. She says that she never really became a Catholic, she didn’t reach that moment of decision-making. Geraldine (cf. 2.1.1) speaks of the new meaning in life she found in Jesus Christ through the spirituality of ‘Barwadi ba Anna’. One conversion experience leads to another and every time one is led to a deeper experience of the reality of God’s Kingdom.

3.4.1. Sacraments of Initiation

Karecki (1995:140) argues in her doctoral thesis that the RCIA reflects the Church’s profound concern for mission and that if used well it can imbue Catholics with a keen sense of their missionary responsibility. This was lost with the disintegration of the Catechumenate. The unity between baptism and confirmation was lost when the order of reception was changed to baptism, eucharist, and confirmation with an interval of several years between each sacrament (Mitchell 1976:54).

3.4.1.1. Baptism and Confirmation.

From being a sacrament of conversion and discipleship, baptism became the sacrament that removes original sin. It ceased to be an explicit moment of decision-making, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, and became a ritual that cleanses from sin and imparts grace (infant baptism). The celebration of the sacrament of initiation outside of the Easter season separated it from its liturgical origin and therefore lost its missionary dimension.

Both Grant (1976:37) and Searle (1980:13) mention that by the year 600 candidates for
initiation were almost exclusively infants. However, the catechumenal process could not be applied to infants and the rite lost its meaning (Karecki 1995:83). Baptism and confirmation were separated because the Roman Church insisted on reserving the action of the laying on of hands and the consignation with chrism to the bishop, while at the same time insisting on infant baptism (:84). Confirmation was accepted as a separate sacrament and the Samaritan case in Acts (8:14-17) is often cited to justify the separation. The Samaritans had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they lay hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. But, Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit, that is why in Acts (2:38) the Holy Spirit and baptism happen at the same time. The restoration of the Catechumenate is very significant if we must discover again the place of the sacraments in the mission of the Church.

3.4.1.2. The Eucharist

In the Eucharist (the holy Mass) Jesus gave a reality by which human beings can grow spiritually by means of the physical assimilation of bread and wine. "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51). The eucharist is the expression of the love of Jesus which is the essence of Christian life. "Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father, having loved those who were his in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). When Jesus instituted the Eucharist, he said: "Do this in memory of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

According to Vatican II teaching on liturgy there are two primary parts of the mass (SC 56), whereas traditionally the mass had four essential parts, which I would like to use in the understanding of the eucharist: 1) Liturgy of the Word: we listen to the word of God from the Scripture; 2) Offertory: the gifts of bread and wine are accepted; 3) Consecration: the bread and wine change into the body and blood of Jesus Christ; 4) Communion: union with Christ in receiving his body and blood. This fourfold division of the mass, which belonged to the Tridentine mass, was used in the medieval times as an explanation of the eucharist in terms
of the work of the Trinity: The Father celebrates the liturgy of the word in His creation, for everything that comes from the Father is Good News. The Son celebrates the offertory: in redemption Christ is offering the whole of creation back to the Father. The Holy Spirit is that sanctifying presence of God. He is consecrating us, transubstantiating the bread and wine. The Trinity is also One God, the unity that is a communion of love. Another understanding is in terms of the life of Christ: Three years of preaching the Good News (Liturgy of the word), the passion and death (Offertory), resurrection (Consecration) and pentecost (Communion).

Let me use the same understanding of the eucharist in terms of human encounter, which is the point I want to make. The call to celebrate the eucharist is in encountering any human being. Firstly the call to listen: people are the most powerful expression of the word of God. So we need to discover the will of God in the people we meet. The reality of any person we meet is a command from God. God is saying through a sick person, “Heal me”, through a hungry person, “Give me food”, through a weak person, “Support me”, etc (liturgy of the word). Secondly, we need to accept others as they are, without judging or condemning them. Others are a gift, and when we accept them, as they are, they do not have to defend themselves, they become truly free and can experience genuine change (offertory). Thirdly, only love bring about change; our love like the love of Christ transforms people (consecration). Fourthly, we are called to be one with the other as if they were ourselves, in true union. “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 19:19). My neighbour is part of me and we are both part of Christ (communion).

The present situation in the church and in the world is of crisis, which is the reason why we are going through a “paradigm shift”. Crisis is the point where danger and opportunity meet. We can, however, only do justice to our high calling if we acknowledge the presence of both danger and opportunity and execute our mission within the field of tension engendered by both” (Bosch 1991:7). It is by following Jesus Christ that we will find the way forward. For me the Eucharist provides the pattern to follow and the attitude to adopt.
3.4.2. Conclusion

According to Rambo (1993:168) commitment is the consummation of the conversion process. Through rituals, surrender, testimony and biographical reconstruction the individual is fully accepted by God and the community. When a convert reaches the stage of commitment, it is a conversion, but they will most probably have another, and yet another conversion and so the journey continues and will only reach its fulfilment in eternity.

In discussing the consequences of conversion, Rambo uses the ideas of Gelpi a Jesuit theologian who makes the distinction between initial and ongoing conversion. Initial conversion is the first phase of moving from irresponsibility to responsible behaviour in some area of experience. Ongoing conversion is the interaction between various dimensions of conversion and the continuous process of change throughout life (Rambo 1993:147). Costas (1980:180) wrote of conversion as a distinct moment and a continuous process. Change is persistent, important and continuous. The consequences of conversion are diverse, some gain a sense of mission and purpose, like Geraldine (cf. 2.1.1), Sophia (cf. 2.1.4) and Francinah (cf. 2.3.2), others are disappointed to find their expectation unfulfilled, like Gladys (cf. 2.3.3), Gloria (cf. 2.2.1) and Lucia (cf. 2.1.6); but the journey continues until its fulfilment in the kingdom.
CHAPTER FOUR

4. CONCLUSION

In chapter two I presented the conversion experiences of ten people from St. Peter's parish, and reflected on them theologically in the previous chapter. The theological reflection was done in accordance with the systemic stage model drawn from Rambo, following his seven stages of conversion (cf. 1.5). The process of research, which belongs to a particular research paradigm (cf. 1.4), in spite of its limitations and weaknesses, raised important questions and insights, which will be discussed below. So, in this concluding chapter I shall consider both the research process and the contents of the investigation.

The study has various limitations. First, the intention of the study was not to come with ready-made definitions and solutions, but rather to discover them from the experiences of ordinary Christian people. The purpose was to develop a rather uncomplicated model (Rambo and Costas) in order to use it to listen to ten interviewees, i.e. not to engage in theoretical debate about models of conversion. There are many theologians who have reflected at length on the subject and have a great deal to contribute: Lonergan (1971) distinguishes five kinds of conversion: affective, religious, intellectual, moral and socio-political. His work was used by many, including Gelpi (1993). Karecki (1995:43), in her doctoral thesis on the RCIA (cf. 3.3.1.4), discusses the aspect of personal faith as the initial conversion for one to be accepted as a catechumen. Pamela Jackson (1990:294) also speaks of personal faith: "This faith thus goes beyond doctrinal assent to include real transformation of mind, emotional life and behaviour, and arises in response to grace". Although there are many theologians who have contributed a great deal to the discussion on conversion, this study was not meant to enter into dialogue with them.

Secondly, the study does not mechanically guarantee that the process is in fact emancipatory for the participants. The method of research employed by this study (cf. 1.4) is open to
abuse, observes Philpott (1993:128), and he quotes Wisner (1988:273), who says that a participatory research methodology can still be used to manipulate people. It will not be easy for people like Lucia (2.5.2) and Gladys (2.5.1) who are sangomas (Traditional healers) to come back to the Church, and for the parish priest and the congregation to welcome them back. By being involved in the research process, the sangomas, the priest and the congregation are challenged to address the issue of sangomas and find their rightful place in the church. Thirdly, the researcher became aware of the reality of bias on his part. The research process can be influenced by the fact that in my own family there were some members who were sangomas and were not accepted in the church (cf. 1.2). In spite of the fact that all research is biased, personal and emotional involvement of the researcher can easily cause distortion in the description or analysis of a situation.

The conducting of this study project raised certain questions and provided new insights for the researcher. These questions and insights are relevant for both the advocates of conversion (missionaries) and the would-be converts. So, the study did not provide answers and solutions, but opened new discussions in order to find out how conversion works in a given situation, in this case, a Setswana speaking black township parish.

4.1. The process of research

In commenting on the process of research, there are observations which are directly related to the particular research paradigm (cf. 1.4), which are mentioned above, as well as observations relating particularly to the method of research adopted by the study itself (i.e. the combined Rambo and Costas methodology). This original approach, which combines the holistic model of understanding religious conversion and the personal experience of Christian conversion described in a spiral model was utilised as the method of research for the study.
4.1.1. Evaluation of Rambo and Costas

The combined method of Rambo and Costas has been very enriching to the study, and has certainly added to the richness of the research, both in process and content. Rambo's holistic method of understanding religious conversion is a religious studies method: "For conversion to be understood in all its richness and complexity, the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, psychology and religious studies must all be taken into account". He sees the components of the cultural, social, personal and religious as the most crucial in understanding conversion (Rambo 1993:7). What is different about Costas is that his method is confined within the Christian tradition and is conveyed by means of a case study that uses personal conversion experience as a basis for reflection (Costas 1980:174). He speaks about the three conversion experiences: conversion to Christ, conversion to culture and conversion to the world. This he described in three concentric circles, with Christ as the center and the first circle representing his conversion to him (:176). Later he changed his concentric model into a spiral one (cf. 1.5.2).

4.1.1.1. Rambo's systemic stage model of conversion

Rambo's approach to religious conversion is predominantly descriptive, rather than normative. It means that he does not adopt a specific theological position within the Christian (or any other) tradition, according to which he judges whether a particular conversion is genuine or not. This study had no intention of judging whether the ten conversions were genuine or not, but set out rather to explore and analyse them. Secondly, it is holistic in its approach, that is, it looks at the subject from a number of different angles: cultural, social, personal, religious and historical. It means that it is interdisciplinary, to avoid oversimplifying matters by attributing every aspect of Christian conversion to the work of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, conversion is defined as a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations - and not a single, once-for-all event. This is where Rambo and Costas agree, in
their emphasis on the complexity of conversion in that it is both a distinct moment and a continuous process (Costas 1980:183). Rambo says that it would perhaps be more appropriate to speak of converting rather that conversion. Fourthly, Rambo distinguishes between five basic types of conversion: apostasy, intensification, affiliation, institutional transition, and tradition transition, which were very useful in arranging the conversion experiences of the people interviewed for the study (Chapter 2). Fifthly, the model of Rambo is heuristic in that it is a useful strategy of finding out how conversion works and does not present the total and final word on the subject. It is also a stage model, made up of seven stages of context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences. Finally, it is a systemic model, meaning that there is no simple chronological sequence between the stages, since conversion is more complex than that. Rambo's model was very helpful to the study, but in the application of the approach to the different conversion experiences, some of the stages worked better when combined with others: crisis with quest, encounter with interaction, commitment with consequences. Rambo's model is not explicitly Christian; therefore Costas brings in a Christian dimension to the study.

4.1.1.2. Costas' Christian spiral model of conversion

Costas brought to the study what was lacking in Rambo's model. Rambo, who is a committed Christian, chose an approach which does not belong to any specific theological position within the Christian (or any other) tradition; whereas Costas takes a firm position within the Christian tradition. The Christian and biblical approach of Costas is based on his personal experience, i.e. conversion to Christ, conversion to the culture, and conversion to the world. His three theological propositions, i.e, 1- conversion as a Distinct Moment and as a Continuous Process, 2- Conversion as a Socio-Ecclesial Reality, and 3- Conversion as a Missionary Commitment, were very useful and relevant to the study in the theological reflection on the ten conversions experiences (chapter 3).
4.1.2. Limits of the research method.

The limits of the study have already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In this section I want to discuss the limitations of the actual method employed in the study. The methods of Rambo and Costas complement each other and together they make a useful framework for theological reflection on the conversion experiences analysed in the study. 1- Rambo’s method is descriptive in its heuristic and holistic approach, which treats conversion as a dynamic, multifaceted process of transformation (1993:6) while Costas’ method is normative in its theological evaluation and based on his personal conversion experiences (1980:176). 2- Rambo’s method adopts a Religious Studies approach, while Costas positions himself squarely within the Christian tradition. In the application of the Rambo/Costas method, many important issues surfaced, and these are discussed in (4.2). Nevertheless, the method itself has its limitations: the fact that the method uses the seven stages (which are not Christian per se) as the basis of analysis, overshadows the theological aspect of conversion; that conversion is surrounded by the redemptive love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit (Costas1980:183). That is why the spiral model of Costas is employed to bring the Christian dimension to the method of research used in the study. The combined Rambo/Costas method has its strength in that the two compliment each other. However, there are some weaknesses: the method is heuristic and cannot be applied practically. Again, a method of this nature cannot lead to any universal conclusions; it raises issues which can only be reflected upon by using another method. No one single method/model can capture the whole of reality.

4.2. The contents of the research

In addition to the research process itself, there are some observations that must be made concerning various aspects of the content of the research. So, this section is concerned with the issues emerging from the ten conversion experiences discussed in chapter two, rather than the question whether they are genuine conversions or not. "Thus whatever the meaning of
conversion, it never takes place outside a cultural context" (Rambo 1993:20). Cultural context is very important for us to understand conversion, because the causes of conversion are to be found within the context of the person converted. This is confirmed by writers such as Kasdorf (1980), Kraft (1979), Luzbetak (1988) and Gration (1983), to mention just a few. Context provides the environment in which conversion or resistance to conversion takes place, but does not dictate the kind of conversion that is to take place. The issue of context is very relevant to missiology today - in the past missionaries made very serious mistakes where the "Good News" they preached was received as "Bad News", because they did not first engage in situational analysis and deep theological reflection.

The context of Thabane is one of 'apartheid', which constitutes the total environment of the ten conversions discussed in chapter two (cf. 3.1.1). "Religious conversion may occur as a response to class oppression in which one social class or ethnic group oppresses another. Oppression can give rise to factors such as pain, poverty, alienation, and anxiety" (McKinney 1994:149). It is within the context of apartheid that one finds the stages of crisis and quest. African disease, cultural stress, healing, dreams and visions are all located within the context. The stages of encounter (advocate) and interaction are also found in the context. The Roman Catholic Church with its schools, hospitals, community and church structures, was available to the individuals who were experiencing cultural stress, which is the experience of those in the context of oppression. The stages of commitment and consequences also take place within the context. People commit themselves to what is available within their context.

4.2.1. Cultural context

Some other issues that surfaced within the context of culture are, 1- the issue of Africans' belief in dreams and how they relate to conversion, 2- the impact of Roman Catholicism on the culture of the people (African culture), and 3- the issue of the persistence of traditional religion (cf. 4.2.2.1). All these issues are related to missiology and can help us define mission

---

1 Fisher (1979) in his article "Dreams and Conversion in Black Africa".

72
and evangelization, as we develop a holistic understanding of conversion. The questions still to be answered are: What is the rightful place of sangomas in the church? Do traditional African rituals have a role to play in the church, such as slaughtering of an animal in rituals for the ancestors, birth and initiation rituals etc? All these are matters still to be studied and researched further and deeper.

4.2.2. Defining Christian Conversion.

Other issues which surfaced concern the definition of conversion. They are, among others, the phenomenon of 'born Catholics' like Veronica (cf.2.1.2), Amos (2.1.3), Geraldine (2.2.1), Sophia (2.2.2), and Lucia (2.5.2) which is important in the discussion of conversion as a process. The issue of leadership (cf. 3.3.1.1) also comes up as having some influence on the understanding of conversion. Conversion is complex to understand, and I agree with Rambo that the convert him/herself is the active agent of conversion:

In addition to the proliferation of contradictory definitions, there is the problem of who defines genuine conversion. Often the convert sees her/his conversion as sincere and profound whereas the advocate or the missionary sees it as less than adequate. Western missionaries seek to find the 'pure' convert, while the converts themselves assimilate the faith in categories relevant to them, not to dictates of the advocates (Rambo 1993:5).

Fernandez (1978) encouraged scholars to look at conversion in terms of the perspective of the covert, rather than imposing causal explanations that they would never recognize.

Religious beliefs in an African context are so embedded that often they are not available for grappling with in an intellectual sense. God is experienced, lived with, and sung about, but a theology about him tends not to be formulated into carefully structured beliefs (Fernandez 1978:225).

Costas (1980:183-187) begins his theological evaluation of his personal conversion
experiences (spiral model) by discussing three biblical terms: the Hebrew *shub* and the Greek *epistrepho* and *metanoeo*, which give content to the notion of conversion. Conversion is a personal journey, a passage from death and decay to life and freedom. From the beginning, St. Alphonsus (1696-1787) gave the reason for preaching missions as conversion, hence the emphasis on the sacrament of penance, which he called the sacrament of conversion (cf. 1.3.1). The 1986 General Chapter of the Redemptorists proposed the theme for their six year period of governing: "To evangelize the poor and to be evangelized by the poor". In our mission of converting others we ourselves become converted. Conversion for the Redemptorists consists of change of conduct, way of life and character; it is based on moral behaviour.

4.2.3. Inculturated mission preaching - a Redemptorist approach.

The ministry of the Redemptorists is the work of preaching parish Missions (cf.1.3.1), and it was when this work reached indigenous black parishes that we were challenged to reflect on the methods we were using. The traditional model of mission preaching was in the process of reform, Redemptorist missioners were constantly adapting and employing new forms of mission preaching, but in the case of black parishes the whole process had to be inculturated.² What happens during the two weeks of mission traditionally, is that the first week is for visiting the parish and updating the parish census, while the second week is for preaching and celebrating the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. This is a priest-centered model, where priests who are outsiders come to a parish to conduct a spiritual renewal and revival every five years.

In the past missioners used to have a set programme that they used to preach missions to any

² Shorter (1992:11) gives a simple definition of inculturation as the ongoing dialogue between faith and culture or cultures. More fully, it is the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures.
parish to which they were invited, but in the present age there is a profound difference in
approach, since we are experiencing a 'paradigm shift'. "What is new about our era, it seems
to me", Bosch (1991:2) writes, "is that the Christian mission - at least as it has traditionally
been interpreted and performed - is under attack not only from without but also from within
its own ranks". This is what is happening to Redemptorist parish missions.

In the new approach being used in local black parishes, the three basic themes of visitation,
word of God and Sacraments are still used, but contextualized or inculturated. First, the mission
itself is contextual, that is, it is prepared by the priest of the parish with all those in positions
of leadership in the parish. The missioners conduct a workshop for the leaders, including the
parish priest, prior to the mission. The aim of the workshop is to introduce them to the
leadership style of Jesus Christ (cf. 3.3.1.1) which is based on the word of God, "My food is
to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work" (John 4:34). The purpose
of training leaders is to give them the skills and confidence needed for the work, which is to
lead the SCC's and BCC's; (Appendix:2), and, to address the issue of "Bakatekisi pushing
converts away" (cf. 2.3.1), i.e. unskilled leadership. If the parish is not divided into zones and
if SCC's (cf.3.3.1.2) do not exist, these are formed and their leaders become part of the
mission team. Secondly, during the mission the visitation is conducted by the missioners
together with the whole team going from house to house during the day and then meeting
with the SCCs in the evening, going from one community to another every day. These meet
every evening during the two weeks of mission, though some SCCs might prefer to meet some
other time. Thirdly, these meetings are for Bible sharing, so themes and texts from the Bible
are provided in a programme prepared by the whole mission team during the workshop.
Fourthly, each SCC, on the day the mission priest visits them, celebrates the sacraments of
reconciliation (confession) and the eucharist. The SCC meeting takes place during the week,
while the weekends are used to have more workshops for the leaders to evaluate the progress
of the mission. The length of the mission depends on the time needed to provide for the
continued spiritual growth of the people in the parish, whereas in the past the duration of the
mission was two weeks for all parishes.
4.2.3.1. Inculturation and Liturgy

At the entrance to Tlhabane township there is a place where livestock, especially sheep, goats and chickens, are sold. This is common in many, if not all, townships and people buy these regularly to slaughter at home for many different reasons. In one of the workshops on inculturation, a woman who had left the Christian Church for the traditional religion, and had accepted the invitation to the workshop, started an argument with the participants when she asked them: "If you are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, why do you still slaughter an animal when you have important events at your homes?" She went on to ask, "Which blood saved you, the blood of Jesus or the blood of an animal?" This began one of the most interesting discussions we have ever had in our workshops.

Consequently many people shared the reasons why they, as Catholics, still slaughter at home. These reasons were primarily the following: 1) to bind the whole family together during important events in the family. 2) to acknowledge the presence of the invisible members of the family (cf.3.1.2.1). 3) it is an integral and indispensable part of celebration. As a result of this discussion the Redemptorist missioners realized that this represented a key area of African culture that had not yet been addressed by the Christian faith and therefore caused a kind of spiritual schizophrenia in the life of African Catholics. The missioners therefore initiated a process of discussion and reflection that led to the introduction of slaughtering of an animal into the liturgical celebration at the end of a parish Mission. The reasoning for this is as follows: a) The slaughter of an animal in African culture is a ritual that binds a family together. To slaughter an animal during a Christian celebration symbolises the fact that the Christian Church is also a family, bound together by ties of faith that encompass various human families. An African family is conceived as an encompassing entity that includes the living, those not yet born and those in the spirit world. At the slaughter of an animal in a liturgical celebration, as in the Eucharist that follows it, the unity of the African church as a family is affirmed and celebrated. b) The slaughter of a goat by Abraham in obedience to God, as reported in Genesis, is used by the Redemptorists in their Missions to teach people about the sacrifice of Christ and the new covenant in the blood of Christ. "Take your son,
your only son, your beloved Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, where you are to offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I shall point out to you" (Genesis 22:2).

c) Slaughtering is also a potent visual aid that challenges people to bring everything they are to Christ. The slaughtering of an animal therefore places before the worshippers in a vivid way their calling to respond to God's grace in Christ by giving their lives in service to God.

The actual slaughter of an animal takes place at the end of a night vigil, while it is still dark. This is usually held on a Saturday night. At dawn on Sunday morning, the Eucharist is celebrated, followed by a feast for the whole parish. The parish choir (liturgical group) is given the responsibility of preparing the whole vigil including the Eucharist. During the weekend before the closing of the mission a workshop is conducted for them to introduce them to inculturation of the liturgy and to the actual preparation of the vigil and the Eucharist.

The vigil is a celebration in a form of praise and worship, so there is a great deal of singing and dancing. The missioners preach the word, the same word of God that the people shared in their SCCs. There are also many liturgical celebrations: reconciliation (the priests in the area are invited to be available for confession), healing (laying on of hands) and others, according to the needs of the parish. The sangomas and other traditional healers are introduced and officially welcomed back to the congregation. They are healers who have been rejected by the church, and many people consult them in secret. Many of them did not believe that they were welcome in the church. The two ministries which are emphasized during the vigil are visitation and leadership. Those called and chosen to these ministries are

---

3 All-night vigils are typical to township people mainly because it is the only time the people can come together without interruptions. It is the people's time born out of their situation where they had to work during the day and where they had long distances to travel to Church.

4 Many Black township parishes have Western style choirs, which have been and still are an important part of the religious, social, cultural, and political life of the community in South Africa. Music is a common gift to Africans; that is why a choir can be a problem in a parish; it can destroy the natural African way of celebrating in worship, by shifting the attention of the congregation from the Liturgy in general to the music in particular. In some parishes, an attempt has been made to remedy this, by converting and training the Choirs into Liturgical group, so that they may now, meaningfully, lead the congregation, not only in music, but in every facet of the worship.
officially installed by the imposition of hands and prayer, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, while the whole community stands with their hands raised over them.

The Church is decorated with African cultural symbols and art, which are collected and arranged by the choir (liturgical group), who also lead the singing during the celebration. The eucharist, during which the whole families, in the African sense, are present (those not yet born, those in the physical world and those in the spirit world) is celebrated at dawn. Outside the Church in the dark, before the Mass, an animal is slaughtered to symbolize the pre-Christian African sacrifice which bound the family together, and as we enter the Church we wash our hands in the water at the door, a symbol of the fact of our baptism which included our Africanness. During entrance into the church the Litany of the Saints is sung and some deserving names from among the dead of the parish are added. In this eucharist, for example, nkgo (a clay pot) is used instead of a chalice, ordinary bread instead of a wafer; although, because of regulation from Rome, we cannot use umqombothi (African beer) for communion we have it made especially for the feast during the closing day. These and many other symbols are used in the celebration, as encouraged by the Second Vatican Council (cf.1.3.2), and the African Synod (cf.1.3.3). The latter declared inculturation an integral part of evangelization and mission, and I believe this is what St. Alphonsus (cf.1.3.1) did in his time. This is a celebration of Africans, by Africans and in the true spirit and identity of Africa.

4.3. Questions for further study

Since the mission in St. Peter's Tlhabane in 1993 (cf.1.6.2), quite a number of missions have been conducted according to this model in a number of other parishes, some of which have been recorded in photographs and on video. The variations of culture from parish to parish are fascinating and this is an area that calls for further reflection and study, because we have knowledge gaps in this area. Such reflection and study must involve people in the parishes.

Another interesting experience in the mission is that, when we invited traditional healers known to the parish, to attend the vigil in their traditional attire, we discovered that they had
either stopped going to Church, left the Church for an African Indigenous Church, or if they did come to the Catholic Church, they belonged to one of the Sodalities (cf.3.3.1.2). Sodalities seem to be the alternative for those who are faced with challenges of a spiritual nature. Many traditional healers, even those who had left the Church, accepted the invitation, but the Church still has to come to terms with the issue. This area urgently needs deep reflection and study, and I think that the role played by the Sodalities in the Church can contribute to the reflection on the issue.

Sacraments are very important to Roman Catholics. They are outward signs of inner grace; they are dependent on faith. Conversion is about faith, which is the foundation of Christian life. One area for further reflection and study is the inculturation of the Sacraments and how they are celebrated.

4.4. Conclusion

How to understand the phenomenon of conversion in this day and age when Christian theology is experiencing a 'paradigm shift', is what this study attempted to unravel. One thing this study made clear is the fact that it is important to reflect on the question of conversion, if we are to do justice to the mission of the Church. In any definition of the mission of the Church is a certain understanding of conversion. Conversion is at the centre of the activity of the Church, whether as a distinct moment or/and a continuous process; the study challenges us to look at it from the point of view of the convert. The context of the convert is an important component for understanding conversion.

In the life and ministry of Jesus Christ we discover a pattern that we can follow. For three years he introduced and taught his disciples about his mission, and then left everything to them. With the help of the Holy Spirit they established a Church. What Jesus came to do is to establish the Kingdom of God, but what the apostles established is a church - that does not matter. What matters is that Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit and authority to continue the mission of the Father.
The converts in Africa have learned a lot from missionaries, and have received the Holy Spirit, but as long as missionaries dictate, control and manipulate the church, there can never be real growth. Now is the age for the converts to become missionaries themselves. The Church in Africa has indeed come of age and must be given a chance to express itself in its own language and culture, so that the message of Christ will reach every area of African life and the Gospel be deeply rooted in the hearts of Africans.
APPENDIX: 1.

The following questions were used in the in-depth interview. They are based on Rambo’s seven stage model, which was used as a framework to gather data for the study:

1. Biographical profile.

2. Identification of conversion experiences.
   "Stream of consciousness" interviews:
   Just let the person talk and only interrupt for clarification, etc.
   With the person’s permission I recorded the interview, so I didn’t have to take notes.
   It took some time for both of us to get used to the tape recorder.

3. Context: The questions took the following form: Which of the following factors influenced your conversion? Culture (Setso), economy (financial matters), politics (do you belong to a political party?) If the answer is ‘Yes’ how did they influence you?
   Coming to the local setting, did your family, relatives, neighbours or friends influence you to change? If the answer is ‘Yes’, who influenced you and how?

4. Crisis usually precedes conversion, and may be the major force for change. Did you experience sickness, problems or a near-death-experience? If ‘Yes’, what caused it, how serious was it for you, and how long did it last?

5. Quest for meaning and purpose stimulated by crisis. The need to experience pleasure and avoid pain - was that important in your deciding to change? Which of the following needs did you have: to gain control of your life, for power, success, healing, or transcendence?

6. Advocate: was there any person like a missionary, elder, minister or catechist who influenced you to change? If ‘Yes’ who, and what about them influenced you and how?

7. Interaction: Did this intensify when you were introduced to the community, teachings, practices, rituals, rhetoric and roles? If so, what was your reaction?
   Did you react by saying, “This is what I have been looking for!”? Or were you put off
and gave up?

8. Commitment is the moment of truth where you make the decision, reach the point. What was this moment in your conversion? What form did it take: was it a public demonstration? Did you see it as permanent or temporary?

9. Consequences. During this journey or process of change, did you experience any consequences, results or fulfillment? What were they? Were they emotional, ideological, justice, social, religious, personal, etc?

APPENDIX: 2.

SEVEN STEPS OF BIBLE SHARING: The format used in the meetings of the Small Christian Communities (SCC). The Leaders are trained to lead the meeting in Bible Sharing and this is one of the methods followed.

1. RE LALETSALE MORENA (We invite the Lord)
   We make a prayer to the Holy Spirit to guide us in the name of Jesus.

2. RE BALE DITEMANA TSE DI KGETHILWING (We read the text from the Bible)
   Each group member has a Bible: the reader reads clearly, slowly and loud, with respect and love.

3. RE SEKA -SEKA PUISO MMOG) (We try to understand the text well)
   No preaching! No discussion! What important words do we find?
   We read the text again.

4. RE REETSA TLHOTLHELETSO YA NODIMO (We let God speak to us)
   5 minutes silence: we meditate privately.

5. RE TLHAKANELA MMOGO DITLHOT1HELETSO TSE RE DI LEMOGILENG MO PELONG (We share what we have hear(i) in our hearts)
   No preaching! No discussion!
   Each one expresses his/her own views on the message of the text.

6. RE SENKA MMOGO "MOLAETSA WA BOTSHILO" (We search together)
What does the Lord want us to do?
Which WORD will we take home?

7. RE RAPELA MMOGO (We pray together)
A prayer is said by everybody together or someone may close with a song.

APPENDIX: 3. The Glossary.

Sangoma - a diviner.
Ngaka ya ditlhare - a herbalist.
Ngaka ya ditaola - a doctor of bones.
Mosebeletsi - a faith healer.
Kamogelo - Holy communion.
Tlhomamiso - Confirmation.
Tlhabologo - Conversion, same word also used for Civilization.
"Ek is nie ‘bantu’ nie" - I am not 'black'.
Bantu - From the Nguni word 'abantu' and the Sotho word 'batho' meaning humans.
Mokokoti - the one who knocks.
Seaparo - the uniform.
‘Ke na le badimo’ - I am possessed by the spirit of the ancestors.
Ubuntu - humanity or humanness.
Mokatakisi - (catechist) used for a local church leader.
Ukufa kwabantu - A disease that can only be explained in an African context.
APPENDIX: 4. Abbreviations.

CSsR - Redemptorist: Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.
OFM - Franciscans: Order of Friars Minor.
OP - Dominicans: Order of Preachers.
OMI - Oblates of Mary Immaculate.
SJ - Jesuits: Society of Jesus.
RCIA - Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.
SCC - Small Christian Community
BCC - Basic Christian Community.
CEB - Communidad Ecclesial de Base.
NGG - Neighbourhood Gospel Group.
SACBC - Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference.
SA - South Africa.
J &P - Justice and Peace.
O.T. - Old Testament.
AIC - African Independent Church
LG - Lumen Gentium
UR - Unitatis Redintegratio
AG - Ad Gentes
GS - Gaudeum et Spes
EN - Evangeli Nuntiandi
RM - Redemptio Missio
EA - Ecclesia in Africa
SC - Sacrosanctum Concilium
LIST OF REFERENCES CITED.


Eerdmans. (173-191).


London: Redemptorist Publications.


Kenya: Gaba Publication. Spearhead No.75.


Germiston: Lumko.


Germiston: Lumko. (73-85).


Maryknoll: Orbis Books. (9-23).
John Wiley & Sons.
Schillebeeckx, E. 1963. Christ the sacrament of the encounter with God.


